University of Alberta

EMOTIONAL BOND IN RELATIONAL MASCULINITY:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Man Question

"What is it with men anyway?" As a psychologist clients have often confronted me with this question, as have colleagues and friends. Invariably it is women who pose the question, most often in a tone that implies some masculine flaw. More specifically and commonly it conveys the message that there is something wrong with men in relationships. Moreover, the implication is that there is something wrong with men in general, not just "the man" whose conduct may have prompted the question.

On those occasions when it seemed appropriate to respond to this question, I have often felt somewhat ill equipped. I have not found that either my training in professional psychology or the literature of professional psychology adequately prepared me to respond to questions about the psychology of men or of men in close relationships. Notwithstanding the efforts by some to stimulate reflection on the nature of masculinity (see Bly, 1990; Keen, 1991; Meade, 1993), the psychology of men and of men in close relationship remains relatively undeveloped in the profession of psychology.

Perhaps as a testament to the relative insignificance of the psychology of men, bookstores typically devote much shelf space to women's psychology and relationality. Titles pertaining to men's psychology are usually nonexistent or few in number. This may properly reflect the realities of marketing in which there is little commercial interest in the psychology of men. Nonetheless, in the academic world neglect of the psychology of men is no less evident. A search of electronic databases for professional psychology revealed a similar dearth of information about the psychology of men compared to women. Social scientists have been very busy inquiring into the psychology of women, but very little into of the psychology of men. Using the search terms "psychology of men" and "psychology of women" a large discrepancy was revealed in the amount of published research and dialogue regarding these two concepts (Academic Search Premier, 2003). Confining this search to peer reviewed publications, 24 references were found for the psychology of men, compared to 1,586 articles referring to the psychology of women.

For the most part information pertinent to the psychology of men must be gleaned from the results of research devoted to other psychological variables. Hence, the prospect of understanding the psychology of men is to a large degree restricted to secondary results accruing from the practice of controlling for gender differences in research on other phenomena. To the best of my knowledge there has been no organized attempt to glean information relevant to the psychology of men from existing gender findings in psychological research. Nor does there appear to be a visible effort to investigate the psychology of men or men in relationships that in any way parallels that regarding the psychology of women. We are for the most part left with the guidance of popular psychology and stereotypes to provide direction concerning the psychology of men.

Given the significance of relationships for human beings and the recurring man-question it is surprising that the psychology of men and of men in heterosexual close relationship has not received greater attention from psychologists. Throughout the history of social science the significance of close relationships to the human condition has been acknowledged. Regarding the ebb and flow of relationality as an acceptable framework for psychology, Noam and Fischer (1996) commented on the resurgence of the foundational role of relationships in being human. "The new relational casting of psychology emphasizes the core nature of relationships in all aspects of human functioning" (p. x). Mitchell (2000) also underscored the significance of reconciling relationality as an inescapable human condition. "Among the most difficult features of the human experience is coming to terms with both our relational embeddedness with others (in the interpersonal field) and the embeddedness of others within our own minds (in the intrapersonal field)" (p. 69).

One does not have to turn to research or look far to notice that men are indeed well embedded in the relational domain. The long-term heterosexual pair bond is much more the rule than the exception (Hazan, 2003). Perhaps the significance of men's relational embeddedness is most reflected in the observation that men acquire more mental and physical health benefits than women from being in close personal relationships and suffer most when they are disrupted (Hazan, 2003). Gottman (1999, p. 25) disputes the claim that men suffer more than women from the dissolution of close relationship; however, his assertion that both men and women benefit from a high quality marriage makes relationality no less significant for men. Given the centrality of relationships in the lives of human beings and the impact that close relating has on the lives of men, it is hard to reconcile that men would be as inept at relating as popular lore and stereotype would suggest (Hazan, 2003). Indeed, with so much weighing on relationality one would expect that men should then be experts in this domain. Accordingly, Hazan's (2003) observations on sex differences in mating suggests that relational incompetence would work against the survival and development of men. Ethologically speaking, it seems unsound that men would be as inept at relationships as common stereotype conveys.

At this point it is unclear whether the image of men as relationally deficient is anything more than a popular stereotype. We have yet to determine with any categorical confidence that men are especially challenged, or for that matter reasonably competent, in negotiating the realm of close personal relationships. Arguably we know too little of the psychology of men in close relationships to make such an assertion with any authority. Notwithstanding the unsettling pejorative tone implicit in many women's everyday asking about men in close relationships, the question has merit. The very existence of the question (What is it with men?) posed in everyday affairs may well be a testament to our lack of understanding of the psychology of men and of men in close relationships. It follows that there may well be a great need to acquire such understanding. The fact that we don't have much of anything credible to say about the psychology of men in close relationships may well stem from the fact that research psychologists have not frequently enough undertaken inquiry into that domain. Perhaps of most significance is that men and men as researchers have not asked questions about the psychology of men and of men in close relationship nearly enough. In the formal domain of psychological research we perhaps should reasonably and seriously be asking, "What is it with men anyway?"

The inquiry that follows is an attempt to explicate the psychology of men in the context of heterosexual close personal relationships. At the more general level the objective is to investigate and describe the psychological texture of men's experience of close relationships with women. In order to provide greater structure and specificity the inquiry seeks to illuminate men's experience of the emotional bond in close heterosexual relationships. The notion that an emotional bond is a central feature of adult relationships is an assumption found in everyday and academic contexts. Moreover, the emotional bond is a central feature of attachment theory – a theory that has dominated developmental and social psychology (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999) and that forms the backdrop of this inquiry. Indeed, it would seem that there is a good deal of consensus on the presence and significance of some form of emotional bond in child and adult relationships. Notwithstanding the prevalence of the concept, little can be said to accurately define or describe the term emotional bond in general, much less specific to the experience of men in relationships. Rather, one is left working with the vague assumption that there is some kind of affective experience in close heterosexual relationships that may well act to form and/or sustain long-term relating between men and women. Hence, in the present inquiry a single question is posed: What is the unique psychological and subjective experience of the emotional bond for men in close primary relationships with women? As will be outlined later the problem of posing this question requires the flexibility of asking about the experience of emotional closeness or emotional connection in committed heterosexual relationships for men.

It should be clarified that this inquiry is intentionally not an endeavor to investigate the pathology of men commonly implied by the "man-question." If anything the intention is to investigate what could be good about men in relationship. A review of research and theory pertaining to masculinity and close relationships is undertaken to conceptualize the inquiry. However, no attempt is made to thoroughly glean and organize research findings on the psychology of men or men in close relationships, nor is the review intended to establish the competence or incompetence of men in close relationships.

In chapter two a course is charted first through the sociopolitical dialogue on gender and masculinity wherein the alleged non-relational nature of men is most prominently outlined. In chapter three we turn from masculinity to the realm of marriage and marital satisfaction, wherein masculine relationality inevitably plays out. Herein prominent relationship dimensions are reviewed and some of the secondary gender findings documented. In chapter four special consideration is given to one of the most highly organized and researched phenomena of human relationality in a review of the principles of attachment. In chapter five gender differences in the relational domain are summarized, and the status of attachment and masculine relationality is reviewed. The limitations of the quantitative research method are discussed, and brief consideration is given to the contributions of qualitative research in the relational domain. A proposal is made that a phenomenological research protocol could provide useful insight into masculine relationality under the umbrella of attachment theory, with the experience of the emotional bond established as the target phenomenon. In chapter six the phenomenological method, its challenges, and implementation of the study are outlined. In chapter seven the results and thematic structure are presented. Finally, in chapter seven the implications of the study results are discussed in the context of previous research and theory, and the limitations of the study are outlined.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PROBLEM OF MASCULINITY

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart. 'Tis woman's whole existence."

(Lord Byron)

Of course the condition of being male has not entirely been neglected by social scientists. For the most part it has been sociologists who have deemed the world of men worthy of inquiry and commentary, typically under the umbrella of gender. In this chapter sociological history and theory surrounding gender stereotyping and differentiation are briefly considered. Here we find that some sociologists and psychologists have challenged the restrictive definition of masculinity imposed by stereotyping and have advocated for an agenda that more properly defines and illuminates masculinity. Nonetheless, the literature reviewed in this chapter leaves one with the impression that whatever masculinity is, it is not yet a very good thing. Moreover, notwithstanding the laudable efforts of sociologists to do what psychologists are on the whole disinclined to do, their inquiry into masculinity is still not a psychology of men in relationship. In this regard their approach seems to sustain a trend of dismissing men as psychological and relational beings. Hence, the goal of inquiring into the psychology of men in relationship and specifically their experience of the emotional bond remains unfulfilled.

Males in Western culture are commonly viewed as the non-relational gender, while women are portrayed as keepers of the relational domain. Kimmel's (2000, p. 303-320) discussion of "gendered intimacies" outlines the enduring popularity of accentuating or perhaps exaggerating gender differences in negotiating close personal relationships.

Indeed, the history of "gendering" close personal relationships has been taken to the extreme in popular psychology by characterizing relational gender differences in "interplanetary" terms (Kimmel, 2000, p. 1).

Stereotypical gender differentiation specifies the "agentic" (Bakan, 1966, p. 15; pp. 102-153) male who is more concerned with establishing and maintaining a discrete self than relational connection or the care of others. Bergman (1991) has observed that prevailing theories of male psychological development underscore the task of establishing "a separate, strikingly impermeable and static self" (p. 3). This discrete male self seems to preclude the existence of a male relational self or at least confines it to secondary importance. Conversely, the "communal" (Bakan, 1966, p. 15; pp. 102-153) woman is characterized as emphasizing interpersonal connection and deferring personal needs in favor of nurturing others. Consistent with this formulation of gender differentiation, initiatives have been taken to explicate the psychology of women in terms of self-in-relationship (Gilligan & Attanucci, 1988; Miller, 1988; Surrey, 1984).

Historically gender differentiation of this sort is founded on essentialist principles that presuppose the presence of specific core aspects of masculinity and femininity determined by inherent biological order (Brooks, 2001; Connell, 2001; Hazan, 2003; Philaretou, & Allen, 2001; Whitehead, 2002, pp. 8-43). The essentialist position has been observed to effectively elevate the status of masculinity, which imbues men with more power and benefit compared to women. Gender differentiation has also been characterized as the consequence of socialization to the extent that gender roles are learned through exposure to social institutions (Philaretou, & Allen, 2001; Kimmel, 2000, pp. 3-4; Whitehead, 2002, pp. 8-43).

Essentialist and socialization propositions are challenged in the social constructionist perspective that situates gender historically, socially, and culturally (Brooks, 2001; Connell, 2001; Courtenay, 2000; Hare-Mustin, & Marecek, 1988; Philaretou, & Allen, 2001; Sabo, 2000; Whitehead, 2002, pp. 8-43). In this formulation gender is socially constructed to the extent that gender is expressed in what one does in specific sociocultural contexts. It is the "fluid assemblage of the meanings and behaviors that we construct from the values, images, and prescriptions we find in the world around us" (Kimmel, 2000, p. 87). Hence, gender is produced and reproduced in individual and collective action based on the interpreted meaning of everyday and institutional contexts. Paradoxically this "doing" gender is considered both volitional and contextually coerced. Hence, gender in the social constructionist model is more than simply socialization through learning, but an exercise of active compliance with and establishing the conditions that specify gender differentiation. Moreover, in the social constructionist perspective gender is inevitably founded on and about institutionalized power and inequality. Hence, it is argued that gender cannot be understood without reference to the sociocultural context in which it exists, particularly regarding the function of patriarchal power dynamics (Connell, 2001; Kimmel, 2000, pp. 86-107; Whitehead, 2002, pp. 8-43).

This leads to a consideration of the hegemonic version of masculinity found in both public and scholarly dialogue concerning gender (see Connell, 2001; Courtenay, 2000; Kimmel, 2000, pp. 10-11; Lee, & Owens, 2002; Sabo, 2000; Whitehead, 2002, pp. 88-94). Sabo (2000) most succinctly describes hegemonic masculinity as "the prevailing, most lauded, idealized, and valorized form of masculinity" which celebrates men's competitiveness, restricted emotion, physical strength, violence, and dominance over women (p. 135). This most restrictive version of masculinity seems to be the perfect expression of the aforementioned patriarchal power dynamics noted by social constructivism, and reflects a notable absence of relationality. This is contrasted with the notion of "emphasized femininity" (p. 136) that idealizes the social, fragile, and passive nature of women, as well as their sexual receptivity and deference to the needs of men.

It is perhaps redundant to observe at this point that scholarly and everyday discourse about gender in one way or another engages in an exercise of contrasts. That which is considered distinctly masculine or feminine hinges on comparison to the opposite gender. Consequently in considering the relational domain we are confronted with what Cancian (2000, p. 312-323) has characterizes as the "feminization" of love and intimacy. That is, investigation and theorizing about love, intimacy, or close relationships is based on qualities that are stereotypically feminine. Cancian argues, therefore, that men are mismeasured on the scale of stereotypical feminine attributes in close relationships. In effect, this dismisses or invalidates alternative ways of negotiating close relationships. Consequently when men are "gendered" with the extreme attributes of the "interplanetary" variety, they are portrayed as seriously impaired at, if not incapable of, intimacy or close relating.

Still, there are strong indicators that the degree of difference between men and women in general, and in close relating in particular, may not be as large as some would have us believe (Kimmel, 2000, pp. 1-17). In this regard Kimmel proposes that within gender differences are greater than between gender differences. Of particular note is the consideration that gender is a fluid and plural concept (Clatterbaugh, 1990; Connell, 1998; Kimmel, 2000, pp. 1-17; Lee, & Owens, 2002; Whitehead, 2002, pp. 33-34). The meanings of both masculinity and femininity are dynamic and evolving, and can be represented by several meanings at a given time. This leads to the increasing use of the plural forms, "masculinities" and "femininities" when discussing the respective genders. It is useful as well to note Kimmel's proposition that observed gender differences are contextually bound, especially by sociopolitical factors such as inequality and power dynamics. Consequently context based differences say more about social and political structure than enduring qualities of men and women. Indeed, Connell (1998) refers to a "new generation" of research found in the "ethnographic movement" of the 1990's that very much investigated masculinity as situated in context or time (p. 4).

The history of gender differences is a long one, although formal discussion and investigation of these differences is a relatively recent phenomenon (see Kimmel, 2000; Glover & Kaplan, 2000). Much of the dialogue and inquiry that has, perhaps inadvertently, exacerbated gender polarization belies a positive intention to make gender transparent. This is consistent with the proposition "that gender is one of the central organizing principles around which social life revolves" (Kimmel, 2000, p. 5). This has been spearheaded by feminist scholarship that sought to make women's experience visible, significant, and meaningful in an otherwise male dominated world. In effect feminist scholarship sought to correct the mismeasure of women that accrues when the scale of masculinity is applied to women.

Despite the emergence of a concerted gender focused agenda in formal and everyday spheres, Kimmel (2000, p. 5) notes that masculinity itself remains largely invisible. The study of men has too often focused on discrete male roles or accomplishments. Accordingly, descriptions of men typically focus on their efforts to "prove their manhood." As such, examination of the lives of "men as men" is comparatively rare, and men remain effectively "invisible as men." An exception to this may be what seems a preoccupation with the "hegemonic form of masculinity" (Connell, 1998) that "need not be the most common form of masculinity." Kimmel (2000, pp. 6-7) is explicit in adopting an agenda aimed at removing the "privilege of invisibility" and making gender transparent to men.

The initiative to make masculinity transparent has been adopted or pursued on some fronts. Efforts to obtain "a more honest appraisal of the lives of men" (Clatterbaugh, 1998) have been undertaken under the auspices of men's studies. The terms masculinity and masculinities have been adopted in this domain ostensibly to more clearly define and differentiate the movement, as well as to be more inclusive regarding the diverse ways in which masculinity manifests. Clatterbaugh notes the value of an agenda that seeks to identify and understand the diversity of masculinities in contemporary life, as well as the factors that promote and maintain masculinities. Above all inquiry into masculinities is important for illuminating "noxious and harmful aspects" in order to promote healthier alternatives to masculinity, while preserving positive masculine qualities. Finally, the masculinities agenda needs to be more than an accurate academic description of men's lives, but must also "communicate with men about their lives and the forces that act on them."

According to Clatterbaugh (1998) the domain of masculinities is as yet poorly defined. Indeed, deciding what to "count" as the properties of masculinity is a critical factor in accurately appraising the lives of men. Of particular concern for Clatterbaugh is the error of investigating masculinities based on male stereotypes, norms, and media images. He maintains that stereotypes and images are often inaccurate portrayals that do not reflect unitary constructs, attribute characteristics not actually found in the group, and omit other important qualities. Moreover, men often step outside the limits set by the masculine stereotype. Most importantly, stereotypes and images are perceptions or beliefs about the group, not necessarily actual traits. If the objective is to investigate men as "people not images" inquiry based on stereotypes will not likely provide an accurate description of masculinity.

Indeed, it should be apparent to even the casual observer that men do not fully disdain close relating, despite the non-relational stigma. Men do seek out and live in relationships through the bulk of their lifespan. Bergman (1991) has suggested that non-relational theories of male development may not be fully reflecting "men's authentic experience" in close relationships and calls for a new psychology of men which illuminates men's self-in-relationship. It is the intent of the present inquiry to follow Bergman's lead, and to inquire further into the psychology of men in relationship. It is hoped that this will contribute meaningfully to the masculinities agenda of honestly examining and making transparent the lives of men as men. Moreover, the outcome of this inquiry will optimally provide additional content for dialogue and communication with men about the different and healthy ways of expressing masculinity.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RELATIONAL DOMAIN

The task of negotiating close personal relationships would appear to be a challenging undertaking that may exist regardless of the condition of masculinity. Approximately half of first and second marriages end in divorce, resulting in poor mental and physical health for men and women (Gottman, 1999, p. 3). Although there are indications that the divorce rate has recently declined, high divorce rates persist (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999). Moreover, sustained relationships would seem to be increasingly unsatisfying. In their review of literature on marital satisfaction Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach (2000) note the significance of continuing decline in marital satisfaction observed over the past 25 years. On average marital satisfaction declines sharply over the first 10 years of marriage, followed by a more gradual decline over the following decades.

Under these circumstances and before inquiring into the psychology of men in relationships we may well be entitled to ask, "What is it with people in close relationships?" Indeed, psychologists have recognized the complex challenge of this relational domain and undertaken a vigorous research agenda into the conditions that strengthen or weaken marriages. Some of this research illuminates differences between husbands and wives concerning the variables studied. In the following section prominent variables associated with marital satisfaction are reviewed. Attention is given to research on expression of positive and negative affect in conflict and nonconflict exchanges, partner attributions, cognitive organization of partner attributes, social and emotional support, cognitive distortions, personality, partner matching, relationship maintenance behaviors, and love.

Investigation of marital satisfaction has been undertaken across a range of factors (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). At the behavioral level relational interactions marked by "negative reciprocity" (i.e. mutual exchange of negative emotional gestures) and "negative reactivity" (i.e. difficulty generating positive responses to partner negative expressions) correspond to marital dissatisfaction. Patterns of relational conflict, such as the "demand/withdraw" routine have received substantial attention. Studies of cognition indicate that maladaptive attributions about the meaning of partner behaviors are strongly associated with negative interactions during problem-solving dialogues, as well as marital dissolution. Spousal expressions of support and affection have been linked to satisfying relational outcomes. The role of affect is considered an "essential dimension" in relational satisfaction; however, there appear to be inconsistencies in the specific role that negative affect plays. Finally, relational satisfaction can be influenced by contextual factors such as transition to parenthood, child characteristics, spousal characteristics, traumatic events, religious involvement, economic pressures, as well as social, geographic, demographic, and institutional influence.

Expression of negative affect in relational exchanges has frequently been found to influence marital dissatisfaction (Flora, & Segrin, 2000; Gottman, 1999, pp. 37-41). Negative affect reciprocity, defined as "the increased probability that a person's emotions will be negative (anger, belligerence, sadness, contempt, and so on) right after his or her partner has exhibited negativity" (Gottman, 1999, p. 37), was found to be the most consistent predictor of marital dissatisfaction. The reciprocal nature of these emotional exchanges is a significant distinction. Negative reciprocity predicts marital satisfaction and dissatisfaction better "than the amount of negative affect" in relational exchanges (p.

37). Perhaps less specifically emotional in tone, Gottman also found that the "ratio of positive to negative exchanges" displayed during conflict resolution interactions predicted marital satisfaction. When exchanges were marked by significantly more negative behaviors (i.e. defensiveness or criticism) than positive behaviors (i.e. agreement) marital decline was predictable. Notwithstanding the challenge that emotional expression presents in marriage, Gottman observed that emotional disengagement in which emotional negativity and positive affect are low, signals doom for relationships.

The consequence of expressing negative affect in couple exchanges appears to be maintained across negative and positive conditions of complaining and complimenting, and extends to deterioration in relational commitment (Flora, & Segrin, 2000). Couples who experience marital distress and dissatisfaction tend to have difficulty expressing positive affect. Although expression of positive affect is more common among satisfied couples it does not in itself predict satisfaction. Preexisting relational satisfaction appears to protect spouses from the experience of negative affect in relational interactions, but it is not sufficient to generate positive affect afterward. In addition, eye contact during spousal exchanges, especially by the husband, improves relational satisfaction for both spouses, as well as wife commitment. Moreover, when husbands spent more time speaking and took more turns speaking during expression of a complaint, both husband and wife satisfaction was enhanced. The effect is reversed regarding wife complaints.

The manner in which conflicts begin appears to impact relational functioning. According to Gottman (1999) divorce is predicted in the first minute of a fifteen-minute exchange. Conflicts that begin with a "harsh start-up (escalating from neutral to negative affect) by the wife was associated with marital instability and divorce" (p. 41). Indeed, Gottman observed that women "are consistently more likely to criticize than are men" albeit more so in failing marriages (p. 41). The toxic content of relational exchanges identified as most problematic and predictive of marital decline were criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling. These are respectively described as implying or attributing some global personal and enduring deficit to the spouse, defending a perceived attack on self, verbal or nonverbal expression that places oneself above the partner, and withdrawing from an exchange by physically departing or by becoming emotionally unresponsive (pp. 41-48). Gottman summarized the dynamics of relational conflict. "What did predict divorce was the wife's negative start-up, escalating low-intensity negative affect, and then the husband's escalation, battling back any attempts she makes to influence him with her negative affect. In stable marriages on the contrary, the husband de-escalates whatever low-intensity negative affect the wife expresses, but wives do not, and no one does so when the negativity escalates, even in happy marriages" (p. 55-56).

On a positive note Gottman (1999, pp. 48-51) observed that attempts to repair relational rifts by spouses bodes well for sustaining marriages; however, no gender differences are reported in this regard. Repair attempts are characterized as "spouses acting as their own therapist" when they comment on their ineffective communication, "or they support and soothe one another." In addition, generation of positive affect distinguished enduring and satisfying relationships, especially regarding de-escalation of relational conflict (pp. 58-61). In healthy relationships couple displays of "agreement, approval, humor, assent, laughter, positive physical contact, and smiling" created both an ambiance of positive affect and a mechanism for resolving conflict. Indeed, healthy marriages displayed a five to one ratio of positive to negative affect in both conflict and everyday exchanges. Gottman noted, however, that husband positive or negative affect predicted wife's affect in everyday conversations, and played a significant role in whether or not the demand-withdraw pattern emerged. Finally, accepting spousal influence predicts positive relational outcomes (p. 51-56). Thus, in the throes of relational conflict searching for something with which one can agree regarding a partner complaint or "actively searching for common ground" helps sustain relationships (p. 54).

Karney and Bradbury (2000) reviewed research indicating that relationship satisfaction can be distinguished by the kinds of attributions made within relationships. When positive gestures are attributed to stable and internal aspects of a partner, and negative gestures to be the result of temporary and external factors, relationship satisfaction is comparatively higher. Conversely, relationship satisfaction is poor when positive behaviors are attributed to external and unstable factors, and negative behaviors are attributed to internal stable factors. Karney and Bradbury clarify that attribution processes reflect the conditions in the relationship and the status of marital satisfaction, not individual differences.

In a related vein, Showers and Kevlyn (1999) investigated the cognitive organization of knowledge about partner positive and negative attributes. Organization of information using "compartmentalization" arranges various partner self-aspects cognitively in a categorical fashion according to "different domains, roles, experiences, or traits of the self" (p. 959). Organization by "integration" has the effect of diluting the meaning or importance of negative partner aspects by linking them to more positive ones. The type of cognitive organization strategy used influenced positive attitudes toward a partner, use of positive attributions, physical closeness, and relationship quality; however, this depended on the quantity of negative content represented and the newness of the relationship. Hence, "compartmentalization may be an easy and effective strategy that minimizes access to any negative attributes" early in a relationship when negative aspects are not encountered in quantity (p. 967). In more seasoned relationships, especially where high negative partner attributes are encountered, organization by evaluative compartmentalization would be problematic. Indeed, integrative organization appears to promote more positive attitudes toward one's partner when there is an accumulation of negative attributes in long-term relationships. Showers and Kevlyn suggest that the use of integrative organization effectively links partner aspects that are opposite in meaning and emotional value (i.e. positive or negative). Consequently integrative organization may be more challenging to accomplish and limited in the contexts in which it could be effective.

The role of reciprocal social and emotional support within relationships is an intuitively appealing contributor to relational satisfaction. Indeed, spousal support appears to "take precedence over other sources of support" (Dehle, Larsen, & Landers, 2001, p. 308) in facilitating adjustment to marital distress and marital satisfaction. Perception of high spousal support does not necessarily translate into satisfaction in relational quality. Rather, perception of inadequate spousal support appears to more directly undermine relational satisfaction. Hence, we are cautioned about "assuming that positive behaviors will automatically correlate with the positive dimension of marital quality" (p. 318).

In reflecting on the relational domain "the temporal nature of relationships" (Karney, & Frye, 2002, p. 237) becomes evident. Average linear decline in relational satisfaction over time is a robust finding for both spouses. It is surprising that couples sustain long-term relationships under this condition. Evidently a certain degree of positive distortion mitigates decline in relational satisfaction. Spouses fairly accurately recall level of relational satisfaction; however, retrospective recall of "changes" in relational satisfaction is curvilinear. Consequently recall of recent improvement appears to hold greater weight in perception of overall relationship satisfaction. Spouses appear "willing to admit that their relationships may not be satisfying, as long as they can also assert that the relationship has been getting better" (p. 235). Sustaining focus on change in satisfaction, therefore, appears to allow partners to simultaneously sustain a realistic, yet hopeful view of their relationship. Perceived positive change in relational satisfaction may be the key to sustaining optimism in otherwise difficult relating.

Sprecher (1999) draws a similar conclusion, suggesting that people idealize their spouse and relationship. In sustained relationships both spouses judged that their "love, commitment, and satisfaction were increasing over time" (p. 51) when there was little observable indication that this was the case. Sprecher also observed the significance of perceptions of change in "positive feelings" as associated with sustaining stable relationships. This further underscores "the importance of positive beliefs and optimism for the maintenance and continuation of romantic relationships" (p. 52). In failed relationships there were prominent declines in relational satisfaction and commitment; however, "love was perceived to decrease the least" (p. 51). This illuminates the significance of relational dissatisfaction in relational demise, versus decline in love or affection.

The temporal progression of relational satisfaction also has implications for sustained or dissolved relationships. Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George (2001) observed deterioration over time in relationships such that "spouses became less deeply in love, more ambivalent, less affectionate, and less inclined to see each other as responsive" (p. 243). The stronger marital bond of spouses who sustained a satisfying long-term marriage is reflected in relatively higher ranking on these variables as newlyweds. A similar but more affectionate newlywed profile was found for those who divorced after sustaining at least a seven-year marriage. Late divorcing was marked by decline in affectionate expression and comparative increase in expression of negativity. Couples who divorce within one year rank low on the aforementioned characteristics as newlyweds, and also displayed greater antagonism and negativity. Similarly, those in sustained but dissatisfied relationships were "less in love, viewed each other as less responsive, were more ambivalent, and were more negative" as newlyweds (p. 247).

A good deal of consideration in the study of close adult relationship has been given to a range of enduring aspects of personality traits or temperament, especially regarding their impact on relational satisfaction (Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000; Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Pollina & William, 1999; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000; Worobey, 2001a; Worobey, 2001b). The history of this area of investigation has included attachment, attribution style, love attitudes, empathy, hostility, private self-consciousness, emotional expressiveness, self-disclosure, dominance, pleasantness, self-esteem, and neuroticism (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000).

Investigation of general personality traits, as well as negative and positive affectivity led Watson, Hubbard, and Wiese (2000) to conclude that "an individual's level of relationship satisfaction is primarily a function of his or her own trait characteristics, as opposed to attributes of the dyadic partner" (p. 439). Consistent with previous research "dyadic similarity" or mating by selective sorting according to similarity was disconfirmed. These researchers found little gender difference in the role that intrapersonal characteristics play in relational satisfaction, although mixed results emerged for the role of neuroticism-negative affectivity in women's relational dissatisfaction. In the aggregate relationship satisfaction is portrayed as a "subjective phenomenon" emanating from the "internal processes within the individual" (p. 439). More specifically, enduring relational satisfaction unfolds in the presence of a disposition toward positive affect and extraversion. Traits like conscientiousness and agreeableness appear to be significant in the development of a relationship, but less significant in sustaining them.

Although not specific to relationship satisfaction, investigation of subjective well-being by Arrindell & Luteijn (2000) suggests that partner similarity in personality attributes is associated with life satisfaction for men, but not women. Thus, "assortive mating" (p. 631) where congruence, as opposed to complementarity in spousal personality, appears to be important for the well-being of men, but is of less significance to women. It is notable that in this Dutch sample the relational aspect of high marital quality was associated with subjective-well-being for men, whereas personal but not relational aspects predicted subjective-well-being for women.

In an analysis of trait anxiety Caughlin, Huston, & Houts (2000) also conclude that intrapersonal aspects are important to relational satisfaction. The "enduring dynamics" of stable personal attributes predict one's own relational satisfaction, a condition that remains relatively constant over time. Nonetheless, this particular trait effect appears to unfold through the medium of negative communication. High trait anxiety corresponds to one's own expression of negativity, which in turn promotes personal relational dissatisfaction. Similarly, one's trait anxiety appears to elicit partner negativity. This "emotional contagion" effect of catching or resonating with the negative states of a partner was especially prominent regarding the effect of wife trait anxiety on husband negativity. Gender differences in the development of emotional contagion suggest that husbands' emotional negativity affects women early in the relationship, while "husbands' tendency to pick up on their wife's negative affect increases over time" (p. 334).

Maintenance behaviors have been investigated as factors implicated in marital satisfaction (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002). Spouses may enhance relationship satisfaction by sustaining a positive ambiance in interactions, talking about the relationship, providing assurances about commitment to the relationship, sharing a common support and affiliate network, and assuming shared responsibility for relational and domestic affairs (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Other maintenance enhancement variables include "providing support, sharing companionship, showing respect, and working on relationship problems" (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002, p. 419). Hence, showing support for and interest in the well-being of one's partner, spending time and doing things together, accepting differences and time apart, and "talking through problems or managing inevitable conflicts" contribute to marital satisfaction (p. 408).

In a related vein researchers have investigated ways in which couples communicate relational commitment (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002). Most often couples convey their commitment through direct verbal expression, by actively communicating and addressing relational problems, as well as "maintaining integrity" (i.e. by being honest, faithful, loyal, and fulfilling commitments), and "creating a relational future" by marking important relational events and through a planning dialogue about the future (p. 409).

Nonetheless, the use of maintenance behaviors may have different significance for men and women (Wiegel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Women's expression of commitment to the relationship appears to enhance their own marital satisfaction, as well as love and commitment; however, assuming responsibility for their part in domestic and relational affairs only influences marital satisfaction. Interacting in and obtaining support from a shared social network (i.e. family and friends) seems to enhance women's experience of love, but not commitment or marital satisfaction. Wives would appear to experience love when interacting with their husbands in a positive emotional ambiance, but obtain marital satisfaction from meeting relational responsibilities. Conversely, men in relationship appear to obtain marital satisfaction from the affiliation and support of a shared social network; however, performing relational and domestic responsibilities enhances their experience of love. Direct expression of commitment by men in relationship also appears to support their experience of love, as well as commitment, but adds little to marital satisfaction. Finally, the finding that wives engage in more frequent relationship maintenance behaviors that generate relational satisfaction, commitment and love for both spouses suggests that men may indeed be less actively relationally oriented (Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002).

In an analysis of the Bowenian principles in marriage, Skowron (2000) found "that couples who were less reactive, cutoff, or fused with others, and better able to take I-positions in relationships, taken together, experienced the greatest levels of marital satisfaction, whereas those with less differentiated marriages indicated greater marital distress" (p. 233). In relationships marked by healthy differentiation in which partners are emotionally present and available to one another, marital satisfaction was obtained for husbands and wives. Moreover, a husband's comparatively lower emotional cutoff enhanced his marital satisfaction. In this study no support was obtained for the Bowenian couple similarity hypothesis. Couples did not enter into relationships with partners who shared similar levels of differentiation of self and emotion. Indeed, complimentary differentiation in mate selection was evident. In this regard husbands displaying more emotional cutoff were more likely to be married to emotionally reactive wives, an arrangement that corresponded to marital distress and dissatisfaction.

Inquiry into the relational domain would be incomplete without consideration of the notion of love. Sternberg (1986) outlined a "Triangular Theory of Love" composed of intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment. Intimacy refers to "feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness" that generate a sense of warmth (p. 119). Although it contains emotional aspects, intimacy is not considered identical to emotion. Intimacy involves an "overall feeling" drawn from some combination of happiness and high regard for a loved one, reciprocal support and understanding, valuing their presence in life, sharing of self and possessions, and intimate communication. Sternberg notes that decreasing intimacy over time in close relationships "is the result of an increased amount of interpersonal bonding" and reflects "a large amount of latent intimacy" (p. 126).

Passion appears to be the motivational and arousal aspect of love expressed in romantic feelings, physical attraction and sex (Sternberg, 1986). As the "hot" dimension of love, passion may be experienced as a yearning for union and may reflect pursuit of a variety of psychosocial needs such as nurturance, affiliation, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The decision/commitment component represents the cognitive aspect of the short-term decision to love someone and the long-term commitment to sustain love. This is characterized as the more "cold" aspect of love that sustains relationships through times of difficulty. The intimacy component is described as the "common core" in love relationships, whereas passion and decision/making have more specific relational application.

The three love components of intimacy, passion, and decision/commitment interrelate differentially to form a variety of "kinds of love" (Sternberg, 1986). Infatuated love is a passionate love without intimacy or decision/making, which may have sudden onset and rapid decline. Empty love is a decision/commitment love that lacks the intimacy and passion components, and may be quite common. Romantic love is the combined presence of intimacy and passion components, marked by strong physical attraction and emotional bonding. Companionate love represents the combination of intimacy and decision/commitment, and is found most often in long-term relationships where passion has dissipated. Fatuous love combines passion and decision/commitment components without intimacy. Without the stabilizing element of the later, relationships with this variety of love are evidently prone to end. Finally, Consummate love combines all three love components. This is presumably the optimal love to strive for, one that may be relatively easy to obtain, but difficult to sustain.

Recently research by Lemieux and Hale (1999; 2000) showed support for the three components outlined in the Triangular Theory of Love (Sternberg, 1986). In a sample of unmarried young adults the three love components predicted relationship satisfaction (Lemieux and Hale, 1999), with intimacy contributing most to this satisfaction. Commitment was least predictive of satisfaction for men, whereas passion was least predictive for women. Using a sample of married older couples the three love components again predicted marital satisfaction (Lemieux and Hale, 2000). In this relational condition commitment was the strongest and intimacy the weakest predictor of satisfaction for men, while intimacy and commitment proved respectively to be the strongest and weakest predictor of satisfaction for women.

Hendrick & Hendrick (1986) cited and investigated Lee's (1973; 1976) formulation of six love styles. The passionate love of Eros is marked by strong early physical attraction and desire for reciprocal self-disclosure, interest in partner physical appearance, emotional intensity, a high valuing of love, yearning for frequent contact, and high physical touch (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Levy & Davis, 1988). Ludus is considered the "game-playing" love style that is either played openly or deceptively, and may occur with several partners. Such love is low in emotional intensity, commitment, depth, and frequency of involvement. Storge is more of a companionate approach to love where shared experience and commonality of interest are central. This love emerges slowly out of friendship, reflects a sense of relational security, and is marked by stable emotionality.

Mania is characterized as the possessive-dependent love style typical of adolescence (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). In this regard there is a certain intense preoccupation with the lover, an almost insatiable need for affection and attention, sensitivity to unresponsive love, and ambivalent tension regarding holding back feelings and manipulating the lover. The Pragma love style involves a rational and practical search for a compatible lover based on a set of desirable attributes. Presumably finding a lover with this package of attributes will result in a committed stable relationship. Finally, Agape is considered the selfless love style and would be marked by a good deal of patience, tolerance, and restraint.

Further investigation of these love styles revealed that they are related to gender, self-esteem, love experience, and current love status (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986). Men consistently rank significantly higher on the Ludus love style (although both genders place above the mean on this scale), whereas women ranked higher on Storge, Pragma, and Mania. Persons with good self-esteem are more likely to display an Eros love style. Consistent with the expectation that good ego strength would be required to engage in the game of love those with especially positive self-esteem ranked high on the Ludus love style. Persons with poor self-esteem evidently rank correspondingly higher on the Mania love style. A history of never having experienced love corresponded to low Eros love style and higher Ludus love style. The condition of frequent experience with being in love was also correlated to high Ludus love style. Those identified as currently in love ranked comparatively higher than those not currently in love on Eros, Storge, Mania, and Agape, while less on Ludus

Worobey's (2001a; 2001b) research suggests that love styles are based on stable intrapersonal aspects of temperament. Although men tended to score lower on temperament variables, the high emotionality of fearful and distressed temperament was predictive of the Mania and Agape love styles across genders. Among women fearful, distressed, and sociable temperament more strongly predicted the Storge love style. In two studies men scored significantly higher on the Ludus and Agape love styles, with comparatively less association with temperament. Worobey (2001) notes that Ludus scores were comparatively low, suggesting that men are not particularly invested in this game-playing love style. Moreover, results suggest that women are on average "less romantic than men" (p. 467). Notwithstanding gender differences, Worobey's conclusion that "emotionality was critical for both sexes in describing their approach to love" is notable (p. 468).

CHAPTER FOUR

A MATTER OF ATTACHMENT

An investigation into the psychology of men in close relationship could not properly be undertaken without attending to the matter of attachment. While the concept of marital satisfaction provides continuity in the aforementioned research on marriage, it is little more than a unitary dependent variable. Indeed, observations by Meyer and Landsberger (2002) suggest that the one-dimensional measures of marital satisfaction commonly used in research restrict our capacity to understand the complexity of what marital quality may involve. As is perhaps evident in the foregoing review, research on marital satisfaction is composed of a medley of relational dimensions that are of compelling interest, but do not as yet form a unified whole. In the absence of an organizing theory of marital satisfaction, turning to the broadly developed domain of attachment may provide a clearer path to understanding the psychology of men in close relationships.

Johnson (2003) has underscored the clinical value of attachment theory for addressing "the complex patterns of interaction that constitute a close relationship" (p.3) and filling the need for "a broad integrative theory of relationships" (p. 3). Indeed, Cassidy and Shaver (1999) have characterized attachment as "one of the broadest, most profound, and most creative lines of research in the 20th-century psychology" (p. x). Attachment theory may, therefore, provide a foundation upon which understanding the psychology of men in close relationship could be fruitfully illuminated.

Attachment has been defined as a means by which children and adults organize their approach to close relationships (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994). This definition follows

Bowlby's (1988) comments regarding the ethological foundation of attachment theory as "the propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals as a basic component of human nature" (p. 3) extending throughout the lifespan. In contrast to research and theory regarding marital satisfaction and love, attachment theory is more firmly founded in the notion that some form of emotional bond marks the relational domain throughout the human lifespan. In the interest of properly investigating relational masculinity it may well be informative to consider those aspects of relationality that are lifelong and could coincide with differentiation along gender lines. If there is an inherently and distinct masculine relationality one would expect that it may be tied to the lifelong relationality that attachment theory reflects.

In what follows the principles of attachment theory and the status of research on attachment are reviewed. Having defined key attachment terms founded in childhood attachment dynamics, extension and refinement of the theory to adult attachment is discussed. Attention is then given to an explication of attachment styles and dimension, as well as conditions for stability and variability of attachment organization. The implications of attachment on adult relationality is explored in terms of inter-partner interactions, couple dynamics in sustaining relationships, caregiving and support, marital satisfaction, relationship conflict, and gender differences. Finally, attachment dynamics related to individual functioning are considered in the context of self, cognitive and emotional functions, and psychological health.

Attachment theory is founded on the work of John Bowlby (1969; 1973; 1980) and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The early work of these two scholars in outlining the principles of attachment and conducting preliminary research on childhood attachment stimulated an extensive project of empirical validation and theory development (Bretherton, 1991). Scholars have followed Bowlby's proposition that attachment is a life long process, and have extended theory and research to adult attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Mikulincer & Erev, 1991; Parkes, Stevenson-Hinde, & Marris, 1991; Pottharst, 1990; Simpson, 1990; Sperling & Berman, 1994; West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994). Simpson and Rholes (1998, pp. 3) suggest that extension of attachment theory to adulthood has drawn more interest in the area of personality and social psychology than any other.

Summary of Attachment Principles

There are a number of important principles of attachment that warrant consideration. While these principles are considered to originate in childhood attachment, researchers of adult attachment generally extend them to adults, albeit with some variations in precise application. In keeping with Bowlby's (1977) proposition that attachment provides an organizational mechanism for close relating, the concept of *working models* is a central feature (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994). Constituting evaluations of self and expectations of others in the social world, working models operate as heuristics that guide thoughts, feelings, and actions in social exchange, predict outcomes of social initiative, and provide a means of predicting actions and intentions of others. *Attachment Styles* reflect cognitive, emotional, and social expressions of individual differences in working models, and are associated with one's attachment history. This attachment history typically refers to the relationship between a child and his/her *Attachment Figure*. Working models and attachment styles are assumed to be stable and persist across the life span; however, they are not considered intractable. Indeed, there are preliminary indications that, at least among women, there are developmental changes in the direction of strengthened secure and diminished preoccupied styles (Klohnen, & John, 1998).

An important feature of attachment history concerns the degree to which the attachment figure was *Available* and *Responsive* to the support-seeking child (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994). Attachment theory proposes that the physical and affective presence of the attachment figure creates for the child a *Secure Base* and a sense of *Felt Security*. In this positive affective state the child presumably acquires the confidence to engage in developmentally appropriate *Exploration*. When overwhelmed or distressed during exploration the child will engage in *Proximity Seeking* behavior in order to access the *Safe Haven* provided by the available and responsive attachment figure, and resumption of the felt security. Inherent in this description is the fundamental proposition that attachment is an *Affective Bond*, not merely a cognitive mechanism (Rothbard & Shaver, 1994): that working models "always have affective content and are centered around a pattern of feelings" (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 14). Finally, affect in attachment is implicated in the proposition that one of the functions of the attachment system is to support development of the capacity for *Affect Regulation* (Sroufe, 1996, pp. 172-191). Indeed, secure attachment has been observed to serve as a source of resilience or "inner resource" (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998) when coping with stress, obtained by maintaining a sense of well-being and initiating problem-solving.

Adult Attachment

In making the transition from inquiry into childhood attachment to adult attachment, it is important to consider and clarify certain issues. The first is to recognize that in principle the child-parent attachment relationship is a "complementary" (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 7-15) one in which the care-seeking initiative of the child is complemented by the care-giving response of the parent. In this complementary relationship the child and parent act toward each other in substantially different but interlocking ways. Theoretically, only the child seeks care from the attachment figure and care-giving extends only from the attachment figure toward the child. The distinguishing feature in this context is the assumption that the attachment figure constitutes someone "wiser and stronger" (Weiss, 1991, p. 68) and capable of mitigating the child's sense of internal inadequacy or external threat.

In contrast, adult attachment is conceptualized as "reciprocal" (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 7-15) with care-seeking and care-giving exchanged by presumably equally competent persons who turn to their partner at times of emotional need. Neither partner is considered the older and wiser member. It is notable, however, that the complementary quality remains within the adult attachment system in an intermittent fashion. Thus, each member of a dyad may at different times assume the role of care-giver complementing the care-seeking of his/her partner, and at other times seek the care of his/her care-giving partner.

Inherent in the reciprocal nature of adult attachment is the assumption that pursuit of felt security remains a constant throughout the life-span (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 22). Moreover, this is considered a "search for security" (p. 19), which alludes to the consideration that not all attachments promote felt security or assure it. Felt security may, however, manifest differently for children and adults. Security and threat to security for children is foremost a physical safety that is promoted or threatened respectively by the physical presence or absence of the attachment figure. Nonetheless, felt security for children also implies emotional or psychological security, and is most likely mediated at an affective level.

For adults, security may be deemed more psychological than physical. In childhood physical proximity to the emotionally responsive attachment figure is critical in the maintenance of felt security; however, by adulthood proximity is more readily preserved as "an internalized representation" (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 13). Thus, adult attachment is differentiated by the presumed ability of adults to tolerate physical separations and cope with distress more readily on their own. Nonetheless, research on attachment and various forms of distress suggests that the advantage of internalized representation accrues largely to those with secure attachment (Feeney, 1998; Mikulincer & Florian 1998; Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998). Consequently, adults with insecure attachments may struggle with emotional distress or separations in a manner not unlike insecure children. In a similar vein, the experience of felt security would appear to support an adult version of exploratory behavior, best represented in the ability of secure adults to cope with stress or separation in an adaptive fashion.

Attachment Styles

Much of the research on attachment has been undertaken within the framework of attachment styles, or typologies (Fraley & Waller, 1998). Following Ainsworth's (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) description of infant attachment styles Hazan and Shaver (1987; 1994) formulated a tripartite model of adult attachment styles. These scholars characterize adult *Secure Attachment* in terms of comfort being close to other people, comfort with mutual dependence, and as not being overly concerned about relational abandonment. *Avoidant Attachment* in adults was defined in terms of discomfort with closeness, difficulty trusting or depending on others, and feeling the unpleasant pressure to be more intimate. Adult *Anxious-Ambivalent Attachment* was characterized by an impulse to merge with love partners, feeling that partners limit level of desired closeness, and preoccupation with fear of being unloved or abandoned by their relational partners. Factor analytic research on these three attachment styles revealed three underlying dimensions: comfort with closeness and intimacy (Close); beliefs about whether others can be counted on to be available in times of need (Depend); and degree of anxiousness about being abandoned or unloved (Anxiety) (Collins & Read, 1990).

Attachment styles have also been conceptualized and assessed within a four category framework (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This approach builds on the attachment principle that individuals maintain two working models, one of self and one of others, each reflecting positive or negative value. In this formulation it is possible to construct a matrix contrasting models of self and models of other rated respectively as high or low on dimensions of dependence or avoidance. In *Models of Self* the dimension of *Dependence* captures the degree to which an individual's positive self-regard is maintained internally or externally, and correspondingly the degree to which he/she is comfortable with autonomy. In *Models of Others* the dimension of *Avoidance* captures the degree to which a person is comfortable with intimacy and expects positive or negative responses from the social environment. The resulting matrix contains four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied, fearful, and dismissing.

Secure adults in the Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) model possess positive working models of self and others. Their *low dependence* is reflected in internally maintained positive self-regard and sense of autonomy. Despite the self maintained autonomy, the securely attached adult manifests *low avoidance* in his/her capacity for and comfort with intimacy. Generally, the securely attached expect others to respond to them favorably in interpersonal contexts. Adults with the *Preoccupied* attachment style have negative working models of themselves and positive models of others. Thus, preoccupied adults manifest *high dependence*, which is reflected in high insecurity and a tendency to depend on others to support their self worth. *Low avoidance* in the preoccupied style is reflected in the tendency to idealize others and to be over involved in close relationships. A distinguishing feature of the preoccupied style is that despite the negative working model of self, others are expected to respond favorably to that self.

The *Fearful* attachment style is marked by negative working models of both self and others (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). *High dependence* is indicated in the fearfully attached person's high insecurity, and *high avoidance* is indicated in his/her discomfort with or avoidance of intimacy. Thus, the fearfully attached are assumed to possess a substantial fear of rejection in personal relationships. In contrast to the preoccupied attachment style in which there is a hope that self-worth will be supported externally, the fearful attachment style lacks the possibility of redemption for the inadequate self from either internal or external forces. Finally, the *Dismissing* attachment style reflects a positive working model of self while maintaining a negative model of others. *Low dependence* is indicated in excessively high independence and self-reliance, as well as internally maintained self-regard. *High avoidance* is reflected in extreme discomfort with intimacy and emotional disclosure, hypothetically because of substantial expectation of rejection from others.

Across many studies attachment styles have shown generally consistent frequency distributions. Attachment styles have been observed to correlate differentially and significantly in theoretically consistent ways with reported childhood attachment history, love styles or attitudes, experience in love, quality and satisfaction in relationships, self-disclosure patterns, partner selection, emotionality in relationship, frequency of relationship dissolution, response to relationship dissolution, self-esteem, depression, trust, affect regulation, and ego-resilience (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987; Kirpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kobak & Sceery, 1988; Mikulincer & Erev, 1991; Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991; Roberts, Gotlib, & Kassel, 1996; Simpson, 1990). The Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) four category model has not received the degree of empirical review afforded the tripartite model; however, initial studies indicate compelling convergent and discriminant validity (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Coe, Dalenberg, Aransky, & Reto, 1995; Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

It is perhaps worth noting that secure attachment style, in both the three and four category approaches, alludes to and correlates well with positive relational capacity and experience (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). In contrast, insecure attachment styles indicate and correlate with difficulty in close relationships. Insecure attachment styles are essentially well established coping responses to anxiety associated with a history of inadequate attachment figure responsiveness, and provoked in current relationships. In both children and adults, current attachment figure unavailability is assumed to provoke a hierarchy of responses corresponding to the nature and severity of one's attachment history (Hazan & Shaver, 1994). These range from protest and proximity seeking behavior through to depression and despair, and finally emotional detachment.

Finally, consideration should be given to the dialogue concerning the style/prototype approach, versus the dimensional approach in understanding attachment (Fraley & Waller, 1998; Klohnen & John, 1998). Attachment dimensions have been investigated along the lines of anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998), self and other (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991), comfort with closeness and intimacy, dependence, and abandonment anxiety (Collins & Read, 1990). Based on their own research Fraley and Waller (1998) maintain that attachment styles or types do "not capture the natural structure of attachment security" (p. 108). In this regard they assert that a dimensional approach to studying attachment informs us better about the structure of attachment and better captures the degree to which adults differ along attachment dimensions. Within the context of the Adult Attachment Interview, Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich (2002) undertake a similar approach, distinguishing dimensions of "deactivation versus activation" (p. 602). The former "openly derogate and dismiss the importance of close relationships and attachment issues" effectively having "blocked or extremely restricted memories and feelings about attachment issues in childhood" (p. 602). The latter are "unrelentingly fearful and worried about close relationships and attachment" (p. 602) and likely harbor intense unresolved anger regarding their parents.

Attachment and Adult Relationality

As investigation of adult attachment has continued, increasing consideration has been given to delineating variability in attachment styles in different relationships and contexts (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999; Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002). Analysis of the malleability of working models across situations and persons, suggests the presence of a hierarchical organization of working models (Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002). It has been proposed that an abstract or global working model forms the backdrop for specific representations pertaining to different attachment figures (i.e. parent, romantic partner, to close friends). This permits formation of distinct working models in the context of new or different relationships. Nonetheless, new person-specific working models are not exclusively contingent on preceding working models given that past attachment representations would guide information processing in new relationships. It is notable in this regard that differences between men and women were observed in security of attachment based on parent but not partner representations. Women displayed moderately more security than men based on parent attachment representations. Similarly, using parental attachment representations men appear more dismissive and women more preoccupied.

Much like that of relationship satisfaction (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000), the trajectory of secure attachment appears to change over time, although in the direction of increasing security (Davial, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999). The joint trajectory of attachment security and relationship satisfaction indicates that as the predictable declines of the latter unfold, there are increases in comfort with dependence and reductions in abandonment anxiety. On average attachment organization leans toward secure representation in the early relationship years, although there are "individual fluctuations over time" (p. 798) generally as marital satisfaction changes. For women attachment security fluctuations are contingent on stable vulnerability factors (i.e. personality disturbance or history of psychopathology), with higher vulnerability promoting higher attachment fluctuations. For husbands, the relationship between vulnerability factors and fluctuations in attachment security was considered particularly strong, making them potentially "very reactive to even minor indicators of marital distress" (p. 798). Indeed, the presence of stable vulnerability factors generally predicted insecure attachment, and in turn marital dissatisfaction.

These fluctuations in attachment security reflect a reciprocal process in which there is a "dynamic interplay among people's attachment representations and their ongoing life circumstances (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999, p. 798). Just as stable vulnerability factors influence fluctuations in attachment security, so do past and current partner attachment representations and marital satisfaction. Hence, attachment security changes in response to relational conditions, and relational satisfaction depends on the level of attachment security. Satisfaction promotes security and security promotes satisfaction. In this reciprocal condition gender differences emerge. Abandonment anxiety in women fluctuates as the satisfaction of both spouses' changes, and in response to women's own stable vulnerabilities. For men higher attachment security of either spouse promoted marital satisfaction, especially for men with high vulnerability factors. The attachment dimension of comfort depending on others was a particularly strong predictor of marital satisfaction for men. It is notable that increases in husband secure attachment promoted dissatisfaction and attachment insecurity among high vulnerability wives.

Attachment and Relational Interactions

The reciprocal nature of adult attachment is further illuminated in actor-partner interdependence observed in stressful exchanges (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001). Avoidant attachment and dependence interact substantially with across-partner effects. In this regard ranking on avoidance and dependence influences both actor and partner behavior under stressful circumstances. When giving or receiving support those high on avoidant attachment are prone to display more negative emotion and irritability, psychological distancing, acrimony, and criticism. This is consistent with expectations of avoidant attachment during activation of the attachment system; however, partners of those with avoidant attachment reciprocate with similar displays of negative emotion, irritability, and criticism distinct from their own attachment orientation. This would suggest that under the conditions of attachment related stress interaction with an avoidant partner is particularly difficult. In the case of avoidant attachment relational interaction appears to elicit partner hostility, distancing, and rejecting responses expected by a negative working model of others.

The actor-partner effects of avoidant attachment are mediated by level of dependence in relationships (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001). Negative responses to distress by persons with avoidant attachment are more severe to the extent that dependence is low. Consequently people who display avoidant attachment and also develop dependence "are more likely to develop comparatively positive relationships" (p. 839). Under this condition even the avoidantly attached are unlikely "to refrain totally from care-taking or seeking roles" (p. 839). In this way the negative consequence of avoidant attachment can be offset by dependence, especially for men.

Actor-partner effects also extend to persons with ambivalent attachment, who tend to be more critical of their partners (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001). Partners of high ambivalent spouses were prone to engage in psychological distancing in conditions of seeking or providing support. Here again attachment orientation appears to elicit partner behaviors that seem to confirm working models of other. Nonetheless, the buffering effect of dependence did not extend to ambivalent attachment to the same extent. Primarily regarding men, combinations of high or low ambivalence, and dependence coincided with positive relational interactions. Low ambivalence combined with high dependence or high ambivalence combined with low dependence was associated with less irritation and negative emotion during the stress of support seeking or providing. The combinations of high ambivalence and dependence, or low ambivalence and dependence corresponded to more aggravation for both men and women.

The combined effects of both spouses' attachment styles on relationship functioning were also investigated by Gallo and Smith (2001). Spouses own and partner attachment orientation interacted to influence relational functioning, although use of negative attributions mediated the effects of attachment. Joint spousal anxious attachment was considered a particularly strong predictor of marital adjustment in terms of perceived conflict and support. Avoidant attachment was generally unrelated to relational adjustment and perceptions of conflict or support. The cognitive process of making negative attributions was observed to partially mediate the effect of attachment on relational dysfunction. Pairings of secure spouses were most optimal for relational functioning, while paired insecurely attached spouses are most at risk for relational dysfunction.

Gallo and Smith (2001) also investigated the relationship between the combined effects of both spouses' attachment styles and the stereotypical social attributes of agency and communion. Attachment organization interacted with stressful social context to influence cognitive appraisal of spouses. When exposed to a communion stressor (i.e. disagreement), anxiously attached women perceived their spouses as more hostile, who in turn perceived their wives as less dominant. In the agency stressor (i.e. threat of evaluation) anxiously attached husbands viewed their spouses as more friendly, while perceiving them as less friendly in low agency stress condition. This suggests that anxiously attached men may approach agency stress conditions less aggressively.

Exposing avoidantly attached wives to communion stress had no effect on the attributions made regarding their partner or on reciprocal partner appraisals (Gallo and Smith, 2001). When wives of avoidantly attached men confronted agency stress (i.e. threat of evaluation) they perceived their husbands as more dominant than in the absence of such stress. Similarly, when avoidantly attached men were exposed to the communion stress (i.e. disagreement), they viewed their spouses and were viewed by them as less friendly. Conversely, when spouses were asked to agree wives of avoidant men viewed their partner as more friendly. This may suggest that avoidantly attached men are more uncooperative in relationship.

Actor-partner attachment interaction and anger have also been investigated in anxiety provoking situation (Rholes, Simpson, & Orina, 1999). Generally, higher rankings on the avoidant attachment dimension are associated with greater overt expression of anger during stressful conditions. Although the anger of avoidant women increases in accordance with the level of anxious distress, the anger effect is most prominent for avoidant women when low partner support was obtained. Moreover, avoidant women's anger escalated in accordance with higher levels of husband anger. Indeed, reciprocation of anger was high among avoidant partners, especially if wives were highly distressed in the stress period. Women also interacted more negatively with avoidant husbands, which may be a testament to "how difficult it is to interact with highly avoidant men" (p. 954).

Whereas avoidant men display greater anger corresponding to the level of partner anxious distress, their level of anger was unrelated to partner support seeking (Rholes, Simpson, & Orina, 1999). Avoidant men appear to have greater difficulty coping with partner anxiety and distress than the demands of support seeking. For these men, caregiving related to emotional distress may be "very arousing and aversive" (p. 953). Contrary to predictions of attachment theory, avoidant women appear to desire support when anxious. Nonetheless, they display concern that support may not be forthcoming, and act in ways that may deter partners from actually providing support. The broad conclusion is that avoidant persons will have more problematic and unhappy relationships given the significant role that anger may play in impairing reciprocity of support.

Immediate actor-partner effects of exposure to stress on the ambivalent dimension are generally unremarkable (Rholes, Simpson, & Orina, 1999). Men high in ambivalent attachment "displayed comparatively less anger" (p. 954) in response to high spousal distress, such that partner distress seemed to inhibit expression of anger for these men. This anger profile continued into the post-distress period when their partners were no longer confronting anxious conditions. Nonetheless, ambivalent women displayed high negativity toward their partner, following removal of the distressing condition, if they had experienced high distress and sought partner support that in turn had been low at the time of need. Ambivalent women may be more reactive to the dynamics of support seeking and giving, especially when emotionally distressed. The effects of stress were most prominent for anxious-ambivalent women in the period following exposure to anxiety inducing conditions, at which time they displayed “more subtle signs of negative affect” (p. 953). It should be noted that securely attached women displayed markedly less anger when highly distressed and in response to partner anger (Rholes, Simpson, & Orina, 1999). In turn, secure men display less anger when their partners are in distress. Apparently secure spouses have the capacity to regulate reciprocation of anger and are prone to less agitation.

Attachment and Building Relationships

Attachment organization is implicated in the reasons that adults enter into and sustain significant relationships (Leak & Cooney, 2001). Securely attached persons enter into relationships for autonomous, personally congruent and self-determined reasons that are related to pursuit of intrinsic goals and aspirations. Those with secure attachment presumably enter into particular relationships because doing so “reflects who they really are” (p. 56) to the extent that it is consistent with personal identity, growth, and values. The motive for entering into a relationship for the insecurely attached (i.e. dismissive avoidant and fearful avoidant) is related to extrinsic factors determined by the interests of other persons or forces. In this regard insecurely attached persons would be expected to enter into particular relationships “to please friends, family, or their relationship partner” (p. 56). It is notable that Leak and Cooney found that secure attachment impacted the experience of relational “felt self-determination” and in conjunction with “felt authenticity” contributed to psychological health and general well-being (pp. 60-61). Hence, the positive association between secure attachment and well-being is not direct, but mediated through the felt sense of self-determination.

In a longitudinal investigation of marriage Davila and Bradbury (2001) observed that attachment insecurity and comfort depending on others distinguished unhappily married couples, from those who where happily married and those who were divorced. Couples in stable and unsatisfying relationships displayed high anxiety about abandonment and relational distress early in their marriages. Unhappily married couples displayed "low overall levels of comfort depending on others" (p. 382) and were no more satisfied than those who divorced. Attitudes about divorce, along with attachment insecurity, were associated with remaining unhappily married for husbands. Divorce attitudes did not significantly impinge on wives decision to stay unhappily married.

Although having children influenced the unhappily married condition, attachment insecurity was a better predictor (Davila and Bradbury, 2001). Attachment insecurity also proved to be a better predictor of remaining unhappily married than neuroticism and self-esteem. Contrary to reported previous findings, husbands did display comparably high levels of anxiety about abandonment. Unsurprisingly spouses in unhappy marriages displayed the highest levels of depression. Davila and Bradbury conclude that individual difference factors contribute to relational outcomes, and that how "spouses think and feel about their own worth and their partner's commitment to them can affect the course of their marriage" (p. 390).

Caregiving and Support in Adult Attachment

A key element of attachment concerns the caregiving or support system (Feeney & Collins, 2001; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992; Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002). Feeney and Collins (2001) summarize caregiving in adult attachment as "providing help or assistance, offering comfort and reassurance, providing a secure base, and encouraging autonomy" (p. 973). Persons with secure attachment display caregiving by being emotionally sensitive, providing comfort through physical proximity, and restraining compulsive over-involvement and controlling tendencies. Preoccupied persons are comparatively insensitive and uncooperative, but highly proximal and compulsive in caregiving, typically marked by "inconsistent, intrusive, and out of sync" gestures (p. 973). Dismissing individuals display low levels of proximal, compulsive, and sensitive caregiving, while fearful persons display low sensitivity and proximity, but high compulsive caregiving.

Attachment appears to play a significant role in generating interpersonal support and caregiving (Feeney & Collins, 2001). With secure attachment caregiving is more effective and responsive, while insecure attachment corresponds to ineffective caregiving. Persons with avoidant attachment tend to be insensitive and unresponsive to support signals, as well as disinclined to offer physical comfort and emotional nurturance. Avoidant persons do register partner distress in high need conditions, but are generally perceived by their partners to be unsupportive. Instrumental and controlling support is provided by the avoidantly attached when their partners are perceived not to be distressed or low in need. Avoidantly attached persons provide the least support when it is most needed. Accordingly emotional support from the avoidantly attached is unlikely under virtually any level of partner need. In the aggregate this suggests that with avoidant persons expression of attachment or emotional need is dismissed or devalued. Consequently the avoidantly attached not only deactivate their own attachment processes, but also their caregiving systems.

For those with anxious attachment, caregiving gestures appear to be ineffective, given their intrusive, over-involved, and controlling texture (Feeney & Collins, 2001). This does not imply that they are generally insensitive or unresponsive. When partners are perceived to be high in distress or need, anxious persons do generate instrumental support, but not when distress is perceived to be low. With their high relational interdependence, anxious persons appear disposed to provide emotional support in both high and low need conditions, which would be questionably effective.

Feeney & Collins (2001) considered a number of factors that could mediate caregiving patterns differentiated by attachment style. They observed that self-focus, social support knowledge, prosocial/communal orientation, exchange orientation, interdependence, trust, and egoistic motivation mediated this relationship. The avoidant pattern of unresponsive and controlling caregiving appears to hinge on inadequate caregiving knowledge and skill, as well as relative absence of relational interdependence, trust, and prosocial orientation. In avoidant attachment self-focus or egoistic motivation was unremarkable, exchange orientation was high, while prosocial orientation, support knowledge, interdependence, and trust were low. The compulsive over-involved and controlling pattern of caregiving, observed in anxious attachment, is mediated by egoistic motivations in caregiving, low relational trust, and high relational interdependence. Caregiving in anxious attachment was unrelated to support knowledge or prosocial orientation.

In summary, effective caregiving appears to require "a constellation of skills, resources, and motivations" (Feeney & Collins, 2001, pp. 990). Avoidantly attached persons seem to be unresponsive and controlling in caregiving circumstances in part due to inadequate knowledge about social support, weak prosocial orientation, and low relational interdependence. These are the very characteristics that are necessary to motivate effective caregiving. Hence, the avoidantly attached appear to have "deficits in caregiving because they lack both the skills and the motivation" (p. 990). The compulsive and controlling support strategy used by anxiously attached caregivers appears to be due in part to "conflicting tendencies" (p. 990). That is, their high relationship interdependence conflicts with the combined self-centered caregiving motive and relational distrust. Feeney and Collins propose that just how the caregiving gesture unfolds for the anxiously attached would be contingent on the mediating factor that dominates at a given time. Although no differences in caregiving emerged in this research, it is notable that the communal, "prosocial orientation emerged as a strong predictor of caregiving" (p. 991).

Analysis of support giving and seeking respectively between female and male partners in the same relationship illustrated the "situationally contingent" nature of caregiving in adult relationships (Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002, p. 604). Women in general provide more support to their male partners; however, provision of support by securely attached women is particularly contingent on the amount of support sought by their male partner. When their male partners sought comparatively less support, securely attached women provided the least support. It is notable that the level of support seeking did not differ according to the level of attachment security for men. In the aggregate this would suggest that securely attached women are not necessarily as concerned about or skilled at detecting and meeting partner needs.

Attachment and Satisfaction

The significance of self-disclosure in close relationships was considered in research by Mikulincer & Nachshon (1991) within the dynamics of attachment. They note that as an exercise in being known, self-disclosure is a multifaceted process related to the quantity, intimate depth, and content of revealing self. It involves flexibility in adjusting disclosure to adequately apprehended social cues, as well as reciprocity in matching disclosure of others. Self-disclosure is also considered in terms of high and low intimacy of disclosure, "descriptive intimacy" regarding more intimate details, "evaluative intimacy" that expresses emotion or judgment, and "topical reciprocity" where disclosure exchanges include commentary about something the other person has revealed (p. 327).

Attachment organization is associated with self-disclosure patterns, although it varies to some extent regarding the disclosure target (i.e. intimate partner, father, mother, same/opposite-sex friends) (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). Generally, both secure and anxious-ambivalent persons display greater and more personal self-disclosure, and descriptive intimacy, particularly to intimate partners. Securely attached people display more disclosure flexibility, topical reciprocity, and general conversational responsiveness than the insecure. Conversely the avoidantly attached self-disclose relatively less, and reserve disclosure more for opposite sex friends.

Self-disclosure varies according to the nature of attachment organization. Securely attached people disclose with decreasing significance respectively to intimate partners, friends, and parents (Mikulincer & Nachshon, 1991). Ambivalent persons self-disclose more to mothers and friends than to intimate partners. Avoidantly attached persons disclose more to opposite-sex friends than their intimate partners. Regarding disclosure reciprocity secure and ambivalent persons are more self-disclosing and display greater evaluative intimacy in the presence of a high and more intimate disclosing partner, and experience more positive feelings toward that person. Avoidant persons are relatively disinclined to disclosure reciprocity, and display more negative emotion and dislike in the presence of a high and more intimate disclosing partner.

In order to explicate the relationship found between attachment security and relational satisfaction Keelan, Dion, & Dion (1998) investigated the role of self-disclosure. They observed that securely attached persons showed a preference for and greater comfort with self-disclosure to a partner, by revealing more intimate and personal aspects of self. The securely attached also displayed greater ability to elicit disclosure from others. The combined aspects of disclosing to one's partner and ability to elicit disclosure from others mediated the relationship between attachment and relational satisfaction. The combination of facilitative disclosure and affective reactions when self-disclosing predict relational satisfaction independent of secure attachment. Hence, "qualities such as warmth, trust and hostility have an independent effect on relationship satisfaction" distinct from attachment (p. 33).

Attachment and Relational Conflict

Attachment organization appears to have theoretically consistent implications for the manner in which people negotiate conflict, to the extent that efficacy in conflict management hinges on the nature of models of self and other (Lopez, Mauricio, Gormley, Simko, & Berger, 2001; O'Connell Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). Those with secure attachment display conflict strategies that are more mutually focused, to the extent that concerns regarding self and other are held in mind (O'Connell, Corcoran & Mallinckrodt, 2000). Such persons strike a balance between obtaining solutions to conflict that maximally serve the interests of both parties, and a willingness to entertain midway solutions that do not necessarily optimize outcomes for either party. In approaching conflict, the securely attached are more prone to communicate about conflict, more capably entertain partner perspective, and consider more novel conflict solutions. The insecurely attached are more likely to take a "nonmutual" approach to conflict, with the avoidantly attached more prone to avoid active engagement in conflict resolution. Social self-efficacy appears to mediate the association between secure attachment and mutual approach to conflict resolution. Poor "self-efficacy and perspective taking" (p. 480) are instrumental in mediating the relationship between avoidant attachment and nonmutual conflict style.

The relationship between attachment organization and coping style also affects level of distress in problem solving (Lopez, Mauricio, Gormley, Simko, & Berger, 2001). As would be expected, anxiously attached persons are more prone to use a reactive coping style "marked by strong emotional responses, impulsivity, and distortion" (p. 461). This is consistent with the expectation that anxious attachment corresponds to poor affect regulation and use of emotion focused coping strategies. Those high on avoidant attachment display both reactive and suppressive coping. Not only do they report the emotional reactions observed with the anxiously attached, but also the avoidantly attached are also prone to cope by denying, avoiding or suppressing problem awareness, and becoming confused. These researchers go on to observe that attachment organization appears to influence expression of coping styles, which in turn predict experience of distress in problem situations. In this regard insecure attachment appears to "dispose the individual to use less adaptive forms of affect regulation and problem coping," resulting in a greater distress experience (p. 463). They suggest that the experience of problem related distress has "roots" in basic approaches and motivations regarding intimate relationships.

Attachment organization also has an impact on the effects of empathy in relational functioning (Simpson, Ickes, & Grich, 1999). In general those high on the anxious attachment dimension display superior empathic accuracy to the extent that they attend to and understand the private thoughts and feelings of their partner. This occurs most prominently in relationship-threatening conditions. Under such conditions greater empathic accuracy in the anxiously attached corresponds to relational instability and demise, distancing, feeling more threatened and distressed, as well as loss of confidence in self, partner, and the relationship. Anxiously attached men with greater empathic accuracy have higher breakup rates.

Good empathic accuracy by secure or dismissive-avoidant persons in a relationship-threatening situation has positive relational outcomes (Simpson, Ickes, & Grich, 1999). Such persons accurately perceive partner thoughts and feelings, but either dismiss or avoid thinking about potential negative consequences of those thoughts and feelings. It is notable that secure women engage in more partner checking than avoidant women, with the later also more disinclined to infer partner thoughts and feelings. Avoidant men displayed less overt distress in relationship-threatening contexts and focused markedly less on partner thoughts and feeling. These authors suggest that there are conditions (i.e. anxious attachment) where empathic accuracy is not the "sovereign remedy" in close relationships (p. 765).

The investigation of empathy in attachment has been extended to the distinction between empathy and personal distress (Mikulincer, Gillath, Halevy, Avihou, Avidan, & Eshkoli, 2001). Empathy is distinguished as "an other-oriented reaction to the plight of another person" with corresponding tender and sympathetic compassion (p. 1207). Empathic responding may translate into altruistic helping in the service of relieving the distress of another. Personal distress is a "self-oriented" reaction to the plight of another that is experienced as aversive or distressing. Personal distress may lead to helping, but is done so in the service of relieving one's own discomfort. Hence, empathy and ensuing altruism reflect a "sense of common fate" while personal distress responses are more egoistic in tone.

Generally, global secure attachment organization facilitates empathy toward distressed others (Mikulincer, Gillath, et al., 2001). Persons with high attachment anxiety or avoidance display lower empathic responding. Displays of personal distress were evident for those high on the anxiety dimension, but not on avoidance. Nonetheless, attachment anxiety and avoidance are associated with difficulty recalling empathy memories. Conversely, attachment anxiety is associated with enhanced speed and capacity to access memories of personal distress. Indeed, personal distress is promoted most strongly in the presence of global anxious attachment, although largely when observed distress is perceived to be relatively severe. Anxiously attached people appear be particularly sensitive to distress cues in others, and tend to resonate with personal distress. Despite focusing on and registering the significance of the distress of others, anxiously attached persons display inhibition of empathic responding.

Of particular interest is the role that contextual aspects play in attachment regarding elicitation of empathy and personal distress (Mikulincer, Gillath, et al., 2001). That is, "activation of the sense of security" promotes more empathic responding and less personal distress when observing another in a state of need (p. 1220). Overt and subliminal "security priming" improved recall of empathic memories, but not personal distress memories. Thus, personal distress is generated in the presence of global anxious attachment organization, but inhibited by priming attachment security. Conversely, priming attachment anxiety and avoidance respectively elicited comparatively higher levels of personal distress. This means that arousal of attachment anxiety elicits personal distress even in those with global avoidant organization.

Attachment and Individual Adult Functioning

Mikulincer (1995; 1998) has elaborated on the "self-view" in attachment, noting that with secure attachment the positive view of self also allows a balanced access to negative attributes. The avoidant self-view is predominantly positive with limited access to negative attributes, whereas the anxious self-view is negative with limited access to positive attributes. In attachment theory working models provide the organizational framework for negotiating distress. Consequently they play a significant role in emotional regulation. With secure attachment distress is readily acknowledged in a contained fashion, and constructively mitigated by using instrumental coping and support seeking (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998). Insecure attachment is regulated either by hyperactivation or deactivation of the attachment system, wherein distress is respectively exacerbated in the service of proximity seeking, or defensively managed through relational and emotional distancing.

Avoidantly attached persons are prone to inflate their preexisting positive self-views when self-worth is stressed in a failure condition (Mikulincer, 1998). Anxious-ambivalent negative self-view is devalued even further under such stress. Stress conditions that could impact the value of self have no effect on the generally positive self-view of secure persons. Attachment organization also influences cognitive availability and speed of recall of self-attributes. Secure adults readily and rapidly access significantly more positive and negative self-attributes, while avoidant and anxious-ambivalent persons have respectively easier access to representations of positive and negative attributes. Observation by a familiar acquaintance mitigates the defensive mechanisms of enhancing or devaluing self-view respectively for avoidant and anxious-ambivalent persons.

Mikulincer (1998) concluded that the self-view of insecure persons may reflect "attachment-related regulatory strategies" (p. 432) that occur outside of conscious awareness. Increasing self-awareness inhibits changes in self-view under stress, in turn exacerbating distress. Specifically, threat to self-reliance invokes inflation of self-view among the avoidant attached, which attests to the self-reliant function of positive self-view in this attachment group. Threat to self-reliance has no effect on secure or anxious-ambivalent persons. Threat to relational bonds increases self-devaluation among anxious-ambivalent persons, which suggests that preoccupation with obtaining approval invokes the negative self-view in this attachment category. Secure and avoidant persons are comparatively unaffected by threats to self-reliance or attachment bonds.

This leads to the consideration that the positive self-view associated with avoidant attachment is not indicative of authentic high self-esteem, but a weak and fragile valuation of self that "cannot tolerate discovery of the slightest flaw" (Mikulincer, 1998, p. 432). In turn, Mikulincer suggests that anxious-ambivalent persons, like avoidant, actually have negative working models of others, mediated through the belief "that others are similar to them" (p. 433). Consequently idealization of self by the avoidant person functions to defend against rejections expected upon discovery of personal flaws. Mikulincer also seems to suggest that the working model of self displayed by insecure persons is not necessarily exclusively a static representation of self-view, but the manifestation of attachment-regulatory strategies applied to interpersonal relating and emotional state. Finally, to clarify, securely attached persons maintain a positive self-view, regarding which there is neither defensive enhancement or devaluing under stress, and is unrelated to attachment-regulatory functions.

Investigation of regulation of inner distress through repressive defense mechanisms illuminates the process of affect regulation in attachment organization (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995). Repressive defensiveness refers to the process of avoiding awareness of negative emotion and impulses, largely related to level of anxiety experienced. Securely attached persons display comparatively low general anxiety, and moderate use of defensiveness. Secure persons appear open to negative emotional experience that can be intense, yet do so without being overwhelmed by secondary associations or spreading to other emotional spheres.

Anxious-ambivalent persons display comparatively high levels of anxiety and low use of defensiveness (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995). They appear to quite readily access high levels of inner emotional distress, regarding which they display low levels of defensiveness. Hence, the anxious-ambivalent are prone to be overwhelmed by emotional distress, and have difficulty containing the spread of such distress to other associated emotional schemas. Those with avoidant attachment display moderately high anxiety, but engage in equally high emotional defensiveness. Mikulincer and Orbach suggest that the avoidant defensive strategy is actually insufficient to regulate this anxiety. Nonetheless, their use of "nondifferentiated defensiveness" (p. 923) impairs openness to the distressing domain of the inner world, which effectively limits spreading of emotional activation to other affective content. Hence, the impression of emotional detachment in avoidant attachment may belie relatively high levels of latent anxiety.

In summary, anxiety is comparatively low for attachment that is secure, moderate among those who are avoidant, and highest for those who are ambivalent (Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995). Defensive function is lowest in ambivalent attachment, moderate among secures, and highest among avoidant. Regarding emotional profiles across attachment organization there were no differences in accessibility of representations for anger and happiness. Anxiety and sadness were comparatively more accessible to ambivalent persons, but less in avoidant attachment. The securely attached have relatively less access to anger and sadness, while the ambivalently attached appear to have poor access to happiness. The ambivalently attached more readily access negative affect that is comparatively more intense, particularly regarding sadness and anxiety. The avoidantly attached appear not to differentiate between the four primary emotions in cognitive accessibility or intensity, although compared to other styles had poorer accessibility to sadness and anxiety. Ambivalent people were most adept at emotional recall from early ages, particularly compared to avoidant attachment. Avoidant recall of emotion tended to be quite recent and shallow.

The role that psychological projection mechanisms play in attachment organization is informative (Mikulincer & Horesh, 1999). Defensive projection is the motivation to sustain or enhance a positive self-view by regulating or dispensing with aspects of an undesirable self. This may be obtained by suppressing unwanted characteristics or by projecting them onto others. Mikulincer and Horesh note that while retaining a positive view of self, this process also limits "subjective self-other similarity" (p. 1024). Projective identification is a defense against the anxiety of separation and loss. It is obtained by projecting actual self-aspects on another, and in effect merging or identifying with that person. Mikulincer and Horesh propose that projective identification effectively increases the experience of "self-other similarity" and emotional closeness.

The avoidantly attached are prone to emphasize dissimilarity between self and others, by using defensive projection of unwanted self-aspects onto others (Mikulincer & Horesh, 1999). This effectively maintains the positive self-view. This style uses negative unwanted self-traits to process information about others, which are more readily accessed cognitively, and result in more erroneous inferences about others. Anxious-ambivalent persons emphasize similarity between self and others, and do so using projective identification of negative aspects of actual self on others. This style uses "actual-self-traits in processing information about others," which are more easily accessed cognitively and result in more erroneous inferences.

In summary, the insecurely attached tend to project some aspect of self-representations on others (Mikulincer & Horesh, 1999). Anxious ambivalent persons "overperceive their actual traits in unknown persons, whereas avoidant people tend to overperceive their unwanted-self-traits in these persons" (p. 1027). This effectively generates negative views of others for both insecure representations, based variously on projection of negative aspects of actual or unwanted self. Secure attachment was largely unaffected by projective mechanisms. View of others generated by securely attached persons is more likely to be "guided by a genuine interest to actually know their partner's attributes, because this information may be relevant to the formation of mature and satisfactory relationships" (p. 1032).

Defensive processes in adult attachment organization have also been investigated in terms of preemptive and postemptive functions (Fraley, Garner, & Shaver, 2000). Preemptive defenses involve being inattentive to unwanted thoughts and feelings in order to avoid their activation, and effectively limit encoding of related experiences. Postemptive defenses involve deactivating or limiting access to thoughts and feelings already encoded. Those high on the avoidant dimension display comparatively and significantly lower recall of emotional and attachment experiences. This appears to occur as a consequence of preemptive defenses that direct attention away from potentially disturbing attachment-related experiences (i.e. threats to self-worth and self-reliance).

In avoidant attachment there is a disposition to avoid attending to emotional and relational information, which "constrains the degree to which one can create a detailed, rich, or sophisticated representation of attachment-related emotional experiences" (Fraley, Garner, & Shaver, 2000, p. 823). Indeed, avoidant persons recall less detail of attachment-emotion laden conversations. Chronic use of preemptive defensive strategies may be instrumental in creating detached states that make avoidant persons "appear emotionally blunted" leaving close others feeling "uncomfortable or dissatisfied" (p. 824). Fearful attached persons displayed aspects of preemptive defense marked by lower attention to emotional information; however, the counterbalancing between avoidant and anxiety dimensions inherent in fearful attachment, would make it difficult to use defenses effectively. As such the fearfully attached would experience conflict between sensitivity to emotional concerns while also being less attentive to them.

The role of self in adult attachment has also been investigated in terms of the defensive strategy of splitting (Lopez, 2001). This is the process wherein people experience difficulty integrating positive and negative aspects of self and other. Splitting is implicated in the developmental achievement of "the capacity to form differentiated and integrated views of self and other" (p. 440). Persons with high attachment anxiety display weak self-other differentiation, as well as high emotional reactivity, need for social approval, avoidance of disapproval, and intentional self-concealment. These persons engage in higher "self-splitting" marked by dramatic shifts in feelings toward self, as well as higher "other-splitting" marked by fluctuations in feelings toward others. Persons with high attachment avoidance engage in high self-splitting, other-splitting, and self-concealment, but low emotional reactivity.

It is useful to note that self-splitting and other-splitting correspond respectively to anxious and avoidant attachment in theoretically consistent ways. Self-splitting reflects the "diffuse and chaotic self experiences" associated with rejection fears in an "emotionally enmeshed yet inauthentic relationship" (Lopez, 2001, p. 445). Other-splitting reflects "unstable perceptions and feelings toward" others and may "reflect a more emotionally unresponsive, mistrustful interpersonal orientation." Lopez suggests that self-splitting implies a "self-devaluing and shame-driven process, whereas other-splitting represents a more self-defensive, other-devaluing process for managing the experience of insecurity" (p. 445). It is also notable that women display significantly more emotional reactivity, whereas men display comparatively but moderately higher levels of self-other differentiation and other-splitting.

Secure adult attachment is generally associated with well-being, positive attribution tendencies, and ego identity development (Kennedy, 1999). The securely attached tend to attribute positive events to stable internal causes, and negative events to temporary or unstable external causes. Regarding identity development, persons with secure attachment obtain relatively higher identity achievement, as well as lower moratorium and diffusion. Preoccupied individuals obtain higher ego diffusion and moratorium. Fearful persons have higher ego diffusion. It is notable that in Kennedy's sample of early adults men scored higher on ego identity diffusion and achievement orientation than did women.

A general tenet of attachment theory is that security should promote adaptive coping. Secure attachment organization is positively associated with support-seeking and active problem-solving (Greenberger & McLaughlin, 1998). Nonetheless, this relationship is complicated somewhat by gender differences. Securely attached young women were more likely than young men to seek emotional support at times of duress; however, there were no differences in instrumental support seeking or using planful action in coping. It is notable that although security of attachment with father was unrelated to adult security, it did predict seeking emotional support among males. Securely attached young women displayed a stronger tendency to use positive, self-enhancing attributions for successes, than securely attached young men.

Mikulincer and Arad (1999) investigated the effects of cognitive openness in attachment. Cognitive openness is the extent to which new information, that is inconsistent with an existing working model of other, is flexibly integrated into existing knowledge structures. When confronted with behavior or information about their partner that is incongruent with expectations, securely attached persons display comparatively greater capacity to revise partner perceptions, regardless of the positive or negative value of that information. It is notable that this cognitive openness can be promoted by "priming" cognitions representing secure working models.

Consequently, Mikulincer & Arad (1999) suggest that variations in working models corresponding to attachment style influence the manner in which information about a partner is processed cognitively. Working models of secure attachment contain "a benevolent view of the world" and a positive sense of self-efficacy regarding challenges of the world. Hence, "an internalized secure base facilitates the development of flexible and coherent cognitive structures" that can accommodate coexistence of incongruent or even competing chunks of information (p. 722). With this resilient factor in place more optimal adjustment and personal well-being is possible.

Attachment and Emotion

As would be expected emotional processes are differentiated according to attachment organization (Searle & Meara, 1999). Secure attachment is marked by comparatively lower levels of attention to and intensity of emotional experience. The emotionality of the securely attached is characterized as "easy or open" (p. 154), suggesting that they are not particularly preoccupied with feelings, although there is a comfort with expressing emotions, as they are experienced. In fearful attachment emotionality is considered "difficult or hidden" (p. 154). Emotions are experienced quite intensely; however, the capacity to effectively communicate them is weak. In preoccupied attachment emotionality is "high or labile" (p. 154). Attention is highly focused on feelings, accompanied by intense emotional activation and expression. The emotionality of dismissing attachment is marked by low attention to and activation of the experience of emotion, as well as low emotional expression. Modest gender differences appear regarding emotionality and attachment to the extent that secure and preoccupied women are more emotionally expressive than their male counterparts. Nonetheless, within attachment categories, men and women "reported themselves to be more alike than different" (p. 154) regarding attention to and intensity of the experience of emotion. This is generally consistent with the finding that women score slightly higher than men in emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002, pp. 30).

Models of attachment styles tested by Magai, Hunziker, Mesias, & Culver (2000) indicate that "emotion biases" (p. 308) found in individual personality differences are differentiated by attachment style. People with secure attachment are more prone to display joyful facial expressions, more accurately decode facial expressions of shame in others, direct negative affect from conscious awareness, and have low negative emotion traits. The model of dismissive attachment is marked by ambivalent facial expression, emotional expression composed of positive and negative blends, an emotion decoding bias emphasizing disgust but not anger, and low trait anxiety. Projective fantasy themes in dismissing attachment reflect inner conflict that lacks affective tone and denies anxiety. This is consistent with characterizations of this attachment style as covering hidden affective and relational distress. Although such distress appears to be directed away from conscious awareness, it appears to linger in the "incompletely masked negative facial activity" (p. 308).

The preoccupied attachment model indicated a predisposition to display facial expression of disgust, as well as traits of anger and depression (Magai, Hunziker, Mesias, & Culver, 2000). Projective fantasy themes pertain to inner conflict and affiliation, while parental love-withdrawal characterized childhood experience. The fearful model is marked by predominant facial expression of shame, an emotional decoding bias regarding anger, and high trait anxiety. Projective fantasy reflects the significance of approval-seeking. Childhood experience suggests a history of exposure to parenting practices of love-withdrawal and physical punishment. Hence, the fearfully attached person displays a "desire for closeness in spite of conflicted feelings and fear of rejection" (p. 307).

The work of Magai, Hunziker, Mesias, & Culver (2000) provides useful consideration of specific emotional and relational dynamics of different attachment organizations. They note that decoding biases in facial expression of others may illuminate attachment history and the associated working models. In this regard the decoding bias toward shame in secure attachment suggests a valuing of interpersonal relationship built on personal history. With the disposition to repair social violations that accompanies functional processing of shame, negotiation of the interpersonal domain would be more effectively accomplished. The decoding bias toward disgust in dismissing attachment presumably belies an expectation that others will react in such a disdainful fashion – in effect condemning self. The absence of a specific facial emotional decoding bias in preoccupied attachment is consistent with the characteristic self-centred profile, where the focus is on their own affective and attachment experience to the relative exclusion of others.

The association between attachment style and, age and gender is notable (Magai, Hunziker, Mesias, & Culver, 2000). Females in this study were found to obtain significantly higher rankings on preoccupied attachment than males. This appears consistent with common assertions that women are more relationally oriented; however, it would also characterize women's relationality as more fused and less differentiated. Indeed, to characterize women as distinctly relational in attachment terms, there would need to be a higher association between femininity and secure attachment, something that has not been observed. Age was also significantly associated with all forms of attachment. Men and women appear to shift toward a more insecure and dismissing orientation with age. These authors note that this trend may reflect a cohort effect or a response to increasing experience of loss with age.

Although securely attached persons display a decoding bias in recognizing facial expressions of shame (Magai, Hunziker, Mesias, & Culver, 2000), they experience relatively low levels of shame (Gross & Hansen, 2000). Conversely, those with the insecure varieties of preoccupied and fearful attachment experience comparatively high levels of shame. The low level of experienced shame among those with dismissing attachment is consistent with the proposition that they retain an inauthentic positive model of self. It is notable that Gross and Hansen observed gender differences in the experience of shame, with women displaying significantly higher levels of shame than men. However, further analysis did indicate that it is women's higher investment in relatedness that contributed more to the experience of shame than gender status.

Attachment organization appears to play a role in cognitive responses to positive affect (Mikulincer & Sheffi, 2000). With secure attachment the experience of positive affect promotes "more liberal and inclusive criteria in the categorization of semantic stimuli and better creative problem-solving performance" (p. 168). Cognitive functioning in categorization and creative problem-solving among avoidantly attached persons is unaffected by induction of either positive or neutral affect. Surprisingly, those with anxious-ambivalent attachment displayed no mood change when exposed to positive affect induction. Rather, they "showed less inclusive categorization and worse creative problem-solving" under positive and neutral affect conditions (p. 168).

The role of attachment in emotional functioning is illuminated in the relationship between alexithymia and attachment (Troisi, D'Argenio, Peracchio, Petti, 2001; Scheidt, Waller, Schnock, Becker-Stoll, Zimmermann, Lucking, & Wirsching (1999). Alexithymia has been described as an impairment in identifying and describing feelings, in conjunction with "externally oriented thinking," as well as "impoverished fantasy life" (Schiedt et al., 1999, p. 47). Securely attached persons do not display difficulty in the three key areas of identifying feelings, describing them, or externally oriented thinking. Rather, alexithymia is more strongly associated with dismissing attachment organization, most prominently in terms of externally oriented thinking. Troisi et al. (2001) observed that insecurely attached psychiatric patients display higher levels of alexithymic traits. In that population alexithymia was associated most highly with the anxious attachment dimension than the avoidant dimension, with preoccupied and fearful styles most strongly characterized by alexithymia. Still, alexithymic traits are also prominent in dismissing attachment, particularly pertaining to discomfort with closeness and relationships as secondary.

Attachment & Health

A good deal of research underscores the role that attachment plays in mental and physical health outcomes (Hazen & Shaver, 1987; Koback & Sceery, 1988; Neria, Guttmann-Steinmetz, Koenen, Levinovsky, Zakin, & Dekel, 2001). The concept of hardiness is notable in this regard (Neria, Guttmann-Steinmetz, Koenen, Levinovsky, Zakin, & Dekel, 2001). Hardiness is defined as a self-actualizing "commitment" and "a strong sense of control" (p. 846). It is associated with attachment in theoretically congruent ways, which in turn predict mental health adjustment. Securely attached persons display "values, goals, and priorities that enable them to judge" circumstances in a manner that enhances adaptive coping (p. 846). They display conviction regarding their own self-efficacy, which is expressed in the capacity "to choose, independently, effective ways to cope with stressful situations" (p. 846). These aspects and outcomes of hardiness are comparatively deficient in both avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles.

Research on hardiness by Neria et. al. (2001) underscores that secure attachment organization enhances the capacity to manage stress more effectively than insecure formulations. In turn greater well-being, general mental health, and absence of psychiatric symptomatology are obtained. Conversely, both avoidant and ambivalent attachment styles display significantly lower levels of well-being and mental health, as well as distress and psychiatric symptoms. In a similar vein, persons with secure attachment were found to display greater stamina (Pellegrini, Hicks, Roundtree, & Inman, 2000). Hence, the combined "physical and characterological aspects of persistence, confidence, and enthusiasm for work" emerged most prominently among the securely attached (p. 645). These authors note the absence of differences in stamina, between secure and dismissing attachment. They suggest that this may reflect the effectiveness of defensive suppression of the attachment system among dismissing persons.

CHAPTER FIVE

POSITIONING THE INQUIRY

In order to formulate a specific focus for the research study that follows, consideration is now given to the psychology of men in relationship as it is reflected in the reviewed research on marital satisfaction and attachment. After discussing the status of gender differences relevant to relationality and attachment, methodological considerations are addressed concerning assessment of attachment, and the implications of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. A foray is then taken into the limited domain of qualitative research pertaining to the psychology of close personal relationships. The position is taken that inquiry into the psychology of men in close relationships would be well served by applying the phenomenological method within the domain of adult attachment. Methodological considerations concerning a phenomenological inquiry into attachment are addressed, and the focus of inquiry narrowed to men's experience of the emotional bond.

The foregoing review of research on marital and love dynamics portrays the relational domain as a complex entity that provides insights into the way men and women negotiate close relationships, but little into a distinct masculine relationality. Relationship satisfaction for both husbands and wives appears to be affected by a variety of conditions, although men are no more affected by these conditions than women. To reiterate, relationship satisfaction may be affected by: expression of negative and positive affect, negative affect reciprocity, ratio of positive-to-negative behaviors, emotional disengagement, conflict start-up, conflict repair, spousal influence, negative attribution bias, cognitive organization of partner attributes at different relational stages, spousal support, idealizing of spouses and relationships, personality traits, relationship maintenance behaviors, differentiation of self and emotion, and the intimate love style (Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Dehle, Larsen, & Landers, 2001; Flora & Segrin, 2000; Gottman, 1999; Karney & Frye, 2002; Lemieux & Hale, 1999, 2000; Showers & Kevlyn, 1999; Skowron, 2000; Sprecher, 1999; Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000; Wiegel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999).

Gender differences gleaned from this research provides limited insight into the possible ways in which men uniquely inhabit close relationships and some of the conditions that influence relationship satisfaction distinctly for men. Men who make more eye contact, speak more, and take more speaking turns during relational dialogues are distinguished as capable of enhancing relationship satisfaction for themselves, although men may not be particularly strong at executing relationship maintenance activities. Perhaps to their credit men may be slow to develop the emotional contagion effect of resonating with the negative emotional state of their spouses. For men relationship quality may be enhanced when their spouses share personality attributes. Indeed, marital satisfaction for men may especially suffer when their emotional temperament conflicts with that of their spouses. It is perhaps of no surprise that being more emotionally engaged and less emotionally cutoff enhances relational satisfaction for men. The commitment love style may have little place in the relationships of young men, although it may be an integral factor for more mature men. Moreover, the significance of the intimacy love style may wane for men as they mature. Tentatively it would appear that young men might indeed display love styles coinciding with masculine stereotypes to the extent that love is approached in a game-like fashion; however, the manifestation of a selfless love style seems to contradict stereotypes (Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000; Caughlin, Huston, & Houts, 2000; Flora & Segrin, 2000; Skowron, 2000; Wiegel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999).

It is perhaps of no surprise that in the aggregate there appears to be relatively little in the research on marital satisfaction and love that provides a compelling description of masculine relationality. In this regard Gottman (1999, p. 25) observed that there are few gender differences in functional and satisfying relationships; however, such differences do emerge in distressed marriages. Indeed, while men are typically disinclined to generate many attributions about their spouses, once relational conflict is activated they rapidly outpace their wives in this activity (p. 71). Of particular note is that following relational conflict men, more than women, engage in "distress-maintaining thoughts" (p. 83). Consequently, reactive emotional flooding and difficulty self-soothing following activation of negative emotion may be a distinct experience for men in close relationships. In the context of marital conflict and wife negative affectivity men may well react with anger and disengage emotionally. Nonetheless, when a husband issue is the focus of relationship conflict the female-demand/male-withdrawal pattern readily reverses and men may find themselves expressing negative affect and facing a withdrawn partner. Gottman's (1999, pp. 15, 52) observations concerning dominance and influence in high conflict marriages are also notable. On average husband dominance prevailed in distressed marriages, as was husband reluctance to accept wife influence. Hence, relational masculinity may well parallel agentic masculinity when there is high relational conflict.

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Notwithstanding these observations clarity regarding a possible psychology of men in relationship remains elusive. What we have is a rather disjointed, limited, and clearly tentative description of masculine relationality. Moreover, these findings emerge in the context of comparisons with women, which once again risks feminizing or otherwise mismeasuring relationality. In addition, this body of research generally lacks a coherent organization to guide us in a clearer understanding of the broader domain of relationality, much less the psychology of men in close relationships. With the condition of masculine relationality remaining unclear we should perhaps consider Gottman's (1999) conclusion that the relationship distress may hinge not so much on gender differences, but on "how well the spouses connect affectively when conflict is not the topic of conversation" (p. 61). Indeed, Gottman also spoke of failures in the "marital friendship" to the extent that couples "either do not know how, or choose not, to engage emotionally" (p. 61).

It is possible that the more fully organized and elaborated theory of attachment may better illuminate the psychology of men in close relationships. Moreover, it may draw us closer to the emotional closeness that Gottman (1999, p. 61) spoke of. Although not without controversy and its own complexity, the stabilizing effect of attachment theory may allow us to steer a more direct course. As a well formed and researched theory that speaks to the fundamental condition of relational bonding characteristic of human existence throughout the lifespan, attachment principles would seem to provide a compelling map to guide the study of the psychology of men in close heterosexual relationships.

It has been observed that some attachment features correspond to stereotypical and empirical characterizations of men and women in relationship (Hazan & Shaver, 1994;

Feeney & Noller, 1990). Certainly the anxious-ambivalent style is suggestive of the "clingy, dependent" female stereotype, and the avoidant style the detached "intimacy-avoiding" male. In a review of research in adult attachment styles and gender stereotypes in relationships (Harrison, 1997) little evidence was observed for the clingy or dependent woman. Rather, the relational characterization of women, although not a perfect correlation, seems more reminiscent of a secure attachment style.

Gender differences in attachment style research appear to be somewhat complicated. Research using the Hazan and Shaver (1987) tripartite model did not reveal gender differences among attachment styles (Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990). No differences in distribution of men and women across secure, avoidant, and anxious-ambivalent styles have emerged, even though stereotyping and empirical characterization of men would predict over-representation of men in the avoidant category (Feeney & Noller, 1990; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Using a dimensional approach, Collins & Read (1990) also failed to find gender differences in the distribution of the three attachment styles. They did, however, observe that men reported greater comfort with closeness than women - a finding replicated by Roberts, Gotlib, and Kassel (1996) - and that the Close dimension predicted relationship satisfaction and self-disclosure for men. Further complicating affairs is the observation that men classified as avoidant display less warmth and supportiveness than women classified as avoidant (Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998), suggesting that sex roles may influence expression of attachment styles.

Gender differences in attachment styles surfaced more readily in the four-category model (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). In keeping with predictions of popular stereotypes, females were significantly more often classified with the Preoccupied attachment style, while men were more often classified with the Dismissing attachment style. Coe, Dalenberg, Arnsky, and Reto (1995) also found men to be classified Dismissing attachment style significantly more often; however, women's greater classification as Preoccupied did not reach significance. There is, however, a substantial discrepancy between different age samples in the Coe et. al., study. Frequencies of men and women placed in the four attachment categories were similar within 1 to 3 percentage points in an undergraduate sample. In a graduate sample, however, substantial differences were reported for all four attachment styles. In the graduate sample men and women were classified respectively 37% and 55% Secure, 3% and 11% Preoccupied, 43% and 27% fearful, and 17% and 7% Dismissing. No significance levels or age differences between graduate and undergraduate samples were provided. Nonetheless, assuming that graduate students represent an older population, these figures suggest that differences in attachment style between men and women may occur at least among older adults with advanced educational status.

Notwithstanding the gender differences that are reported in adult attachment research, overall such reporting is sporadic and inconsistent. Researchers who have investigated a wide range of attachment variables have routinely screened for gender differences. The vast majority of these studies found no such differences. A similar procedure and outcome is observed in the research on marriage and love. It is also notable that the preponderance of research on adult attachment, marriage, and love has been undertaken with samples of young adults of average age in the very early twenties. Given the preliminary indication that age and maturity may play a role in the expression of relationality this inadvertent bias may limit our understanding of the relational domain.

Virtually all research in marital functioning and attachment is undertaken on mixed gender samples. Indeed, none of the reviewed attachment studies used exclusive male samples, although a few studies relied exclusively on female samples. Moreover, the intention of most research on marital functioning and adult attachment is done so with the intention of illuminating the effect of various conditions or variables on relationships, irrespective of gender. Gender is most often approached as a potentially confounding variable that is controlled in the service of understanding other target variables. Indeed, the gender differences cited in the present inquiry represent findings secondary to other research agendas. For example gender findings emerged in research intended to test models of attachment organization (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and attachment change (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999), or in explicating relationships between attachment and actor-partner effects (Campbell, Simpson, Kashy, & Rholes, 2001), attachment and marital adjustment and attributional style (Gallo & Smith, 2001), as well as attachment and anger (Rholes, Simpson, Rina, 1999).

Perhaps more importantly, few studies in either the marital or attachment domains were designed to specifically study masculine or feminine aspects of relationality. Certainly, to the best of my knowledge, few if any researchers have set out to intentionally study masculinity in either marriage or adult attachment. Notwithstanding Bergman's (1991) advocacy concerning relational masculinity there appears to be no concerted research agenda that inquires directly into the relational lives of men. Indeed, there would appear to be a dearth of theory upon which hypotheses concerning relational masculinity could be based. The inadvertent and otherwise reasonable exercise of studying relationality through gender comparison may not sufficiently reveal the unique aspects of masculinity in this domain. It is arguable that we cannot expect to fully illuminate the distinct condition of masculine relationality without having men more directly inform the nature of their relationality in studies focused specifically and exclusively on them. Hence, given the absence of clear gender trends in the relational domain, the task of making relational masculinity transparent remains at an early stage of development.

The Limits of Methodology

It is notable that the bulk of research on adult attachment in particular is conducted within the natural science, quantitative research paradigm. Two traditions of inquiry and methods of assessment have dominated this research (Bartholomew & Shaver, 1998). In effect these two traditions differ in their focus respectively on parent-child relationships versus adult romantic relationships. Regarding the former, adult attachment styles are elicited from retrospective interview content and associated with attachment relationships with children. Regarding the latter, adult attachment status is based on self-report responses and associated with conduct in adult romantic relationships. Under both traditions inquiry is restricted by the content of theoretically derived questions and analysis. Most prominently in the adult romantic attachment tradition, the forced choice format requires respondents to fit themselves into the mold of the theoretical prototypes. In this manner respondents are not afforded the unrestricted opportunity to inform researchers of the nature of their romantic attachment experiences. Fraley and Waller (1998) allude to limitations imposed by theory driven investigation in their comment that the prototype approach "will better reflect how the attachment system is perceived by psychologists than the way in which is organized in people" (p. 107).

Notwithstanding the contribution that quantitative research has made to our understanding of adult attachment, it may be limited by the standard use of survey methods and the substantial influence of a well-established theory. In the professional literature human science inquiries into personal relating are virtually nonexistent (Appleton & Bohm, 2001). In Josselson's (1992) phenomenological study of significant personal relationships attachment did emerge as a theme. However, explication of the theme was limited to the experience of "thereness" (pp. 44-69) and no consideration of gender differences was provided.

Appleton and Bohm (2001) conducted a phenomenological inquiry into the experience of "enduring marriage in mid-life" (p. 41). However, with a sample of thirteen women and four men, gender distinctions are effectively collapsed. Nonetheless, the basic relational domain is richly illuminated in the obtained themes. Of particular interest is the higher order theme designated as "the Threads that Bind Us," which is composed of the sub-themes "Best Friends, Allies, and Companions" (p. 48). In brief, participant experiences as Best Friends were described variously in terms of comfort, security, stability, appreciation of differences, support and nurturance, trust, openness, knowing one another, and reciprocal interest. The "Allies" theme reflected the manner in which "individuals align as couples and cope with differences that exist" (p. 51). It integrates commitment with "a style of working together" that combines "compromising, collaborating, coöperating, consulting, and deferring" (pp. 53-54). A "Companions" theme contains descriptions of affection, "the sense of togetherness," as well as "contentment within the marriage and the desire to be with each other" (p. 65). Appleton and Bohm (2001) summarize their findings as follows:

> "Enduring mid-life marriage affords comfort. Security develops in the bonds that exist and offers a sense of confidence and hope for the future. By mid-life, myths dissipate, reality sets in and marital identity takes hold. Communication patterns solidify, knowledge expands and reliance on collaborative-cooperative styles of dispute resolution increases. Couples make time to be together; they interchange roles and responsibilities, recognize and accommodate changes in health, and imagine the rest of their lives together" (p. 69).

Conclusion

The position taken regarding the following research is that phenomena such as attachment and ways of relating are suited to the human science research paradigm, and most notably the phenomenological method. One could argue that above many other targets of psychological inquiry, attachment is one that would demand a method that draws inquiry closer to the lived experience of the phenomena themselves. Furthermore, it is interesting to consider that the principles of attachment theory and the method of natural science effectively detach inquiry and understanding from the everyday lived world in much the same way that men have been characterized as detached in close relationships. It is perhaps all too easy and routine to approach the psychology of men in such a detached fashion. In view of the characterization of men as detached, and consistent with the aforementioned intentions of masculinity studies, it is perhaps imperative that we actively inquire about men in a manner that counters this tendency. With this in mind, the present study followed phenomenological research methods that more directly investigate the lived experience of men in significant relationships with women.

There is an indication that the current state of research on attachment and men's way of relating is equivocal. Certainly we cannot identify with any confidence a characteristically male attachment style; however, trends in this research suggest that solid gender differences in attachment styles may yet be found. Moreover, the trends in attachment style research suggest that failure to observe consistent and significant gender differences in attachment style may be an artifact of measurement and sampling procedures. The indication of emerging gender differences when attachment styles are defined in terms of four (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) instead of three (Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994) attachment categories not surprisingly suggests that illuminating gender differences in attachment rests on how we interrogate the phenomenon. This suggests that a different way of inquiring about attachment may inform us more clearly about the nature of attachment for men and women.

It is relevant to the present inquiry to reiterate that the distinct psychology of men has as a rule been neglected in scholarly social science research. Moreover, the discrete study of men in relationship remains a relatively unexplored domain. McGill's (1985) inquiry into male intimacy stands as a single exception to the neglect of male psychology and ways of relating. Although McGill's research method was primarily in the form of nonexperimental survey, it was supplemented with some in depth follow-up interviews. Nonetheless, the study results describe men's relationship behaviors and do not capture the experiential and meaning dimensions of men in relationship. Thus, there appears to be a clear need for more exclusive and specific study of men.

In summary, it was expected that by conducting a phenomenological inquiry into the meaning of men's experience of attachment that several objectives may be pursued. The first objective is very exploratory in nature and seeks simply to see how phenomenological inquiry can contribute to the current understanding of adult attachment that is derived almost exclusively from quantitative research. In other words, the objective is to investigate adult attachment from a different perspective. Secondly, it was anticipated that this study would provide insight into the unique nature of male attachment and in doing so provide a basis for continued inquiry into relational masculinity. It should be clear that in this regard the objective of the present proposal was not and could not be to resolve gender differences in adult attachment. It follows, that a third objective is to contribute to the small and growing, but otherwise neglected, theory and research base on the psychology of men.

Preliminary Considerations In Researching Attachment

Before stating the research question and outlining the methodology more specifically, some general considerations must be addressed. The first constitutes a significant methodological concern regarding the application of a phenomenological method to a concept that is so heavily theory laden. It cannot be denied that the concept of attachment has a substantial history of theoretical elaboration, such that as a phenomenon it would seem highly detached from the life-world to which phenomenology turns. Thus, to be true to the phenomenological method, the inquiry must investigate men's attachment as a phenomenon that is more firmly rooted in the everyday lived-world than the abstracted theory of attachment provides. To this end a concrete everyday lived experience must be identified that can be justifiably said to at least approximate the concept of attachment.

A second concern has implications for framing the research question and the means of inquiring about it with research participants. That is, expressions such as "attachment" or "being attached" arguably do not constitute meaningful language of everyday living that would elicit useful accounts of the phenomenon. This is perhaps a most salient artifact of the distancing effect that theorizing can impose - where the language of a phenomenon is no longer that which those living it recognize. Thus, the present inquiry must also clarify the language and phrasing that will elicit descriptions of the experience implied by the concept of attachment.

To address these two issues it may help to recall that attachment is theorized to be a universal phenomenon experienced by all human beings (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, p. 2). Thus, if the theory is correct it should not be difficult to identify everyday lived experience representative of attachment. The position taken in this study is that certain central features of theoretical attachment may be grounded in ordinary lived experience. The most notable central feature is that attachment is an *Affective Bond* marked by a *Felt Security*. Transforming this into more ordinary language, the primary phenomenon of inquiry becomes *the meaning of men's experience of emotional connection* or *emotional bond* in significant relationships with women.

To be a thorough inquiry it is important to also investigate *Felt Security*. Notwithstanding the significance of felt security indicated by theory and research in attachment, it seems reasonable to consider that the search for and acquisition of security would be an everyday relational imperative. Thus, in order to fully articulate men's way of being in relationship, it could be fruitful to pursue this line of inquiry. It is notable in this regard that Josselson's (1992, pp. 44-69) phenomenological inquiry into personal relating identified "thereness" as an essential dimension in attachment. Arguably this also alludes to the reciprocal quality of care-seeking and care-giving in adult attachment (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994, pp. 7-15). Felt security, therefore, could be translated into everyday language as an inquiry into the concrete *experience of someone being emotionally there for you* or of being emotionally there for someone.

A third issue that warrants consideration is the hypothesized quiescent nature of attachment. That is, the attachment system is presumed to lie dormant unless activated by distress or separation. Thus, one might only know of the experience of attachment in its absence or in the face of a challenge to the bond. The significance of the quiescent nature of attachment pertains to whether participants can actually describe concrete experiences of attachment. This may constitute a substantial challenge during interviews. Participants may be better able to describe experiences of threats to attachment than the positive affective bond itself. To this end, it may be wise to provide for the option of inquiry into disrupted attachment. This not only permits apprehending of the broader structure of men's attachment experience, but also provides a platform for probing of the positive affective bond using contrast.

CHAPTER SIX

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

To reiterate, the present study sought to investigate the meaning of men's experience in close heterosexual relationships. Guided by the principles of attachment theory the aim of this study was to illuminate men's experience of the emotional bond using a phenomenological method of inquiry and analysis. To bring the question closer to everyday lived experience, the inquiry examined the meaning of men's experience of emotional connection or closeness in significant relationships with women.

Participants

A "snowball" sampling method was undertaken by distributing a circular outlining the need for heterosexual males to participate in a study of men's experience of close relationships (see appendix one). The circular was distributed among friends and colleagues who in turn circulated the request to others. Men were sought who were over the age of 30 years and currently in a committed relationship sustained for more than one year.

The obtained sample was composed of twelve men who ranged in age from 29 to 66 years. At the time of the interviews all were in marriages that had been sustained for some 5 to 22 years. Nine participants were in their first and only marriage. Eight participants had children from the current relationship, seven of them still with children at home. Two participants had not yet started a family, one had grown children from a previous marriage, and one had no plans to have children. All but two participants had university education with undergraduate or graduate degrees. These ten men all worked in the science and social science professions. The remaining two participants had careers in retail business.

Interviews

Individual tape recorded interviews were conducted with all participants. Interviews took place variously in the homes of participants (3), my home (2), or in my office (7), and ranged in length from one to two hours. At the outset of the meeting the purpose of the study, the interview structure, ethical considerations, and plans for follow-up were discussed. Participants were presented with a consent form to read and sign, the content of which was orally reviewed (see appendix Two). Confidentiality conditions, risks to the participant, and the provision to withdraw from the study were outlined. On conclusion of the interview participants were again asked if they were willing to participate in follow-up contact, and all indicated such willingness.

Participants were asked to describe their experience of the emotional bond in their primary heterosexual relationships. A script was read to participants at the beginning of the interview asking that they describe their experience of emotional connection or emotional closeness in their primary relationships with women (see appendix Three). Participants were asked to focus their descriptions on specific episodes, events, or moments in which they experienced emotional connection or closeness. To aide in clarifying the phenomenon participants were also asked to describe experiences of the absence of emotional connection or closeness. In only a few instances was the question posed regarding "the experience of someone being there for you." Additional prompts were prepared and used as necessary to guide participants in accessing and describing concrete experiences of emotional connection or closeness.

An awkward lull typically followed reading of the prepared script, following which participants would launch into commentary about some aspect of their experience of close relationships and marriage. The content of that initial narrative ranged variously from comments specific to the research question, to their history of present and past relationships, and to opinions or beliefs about close relating. My practice was to simply listen attentively to these narratives for a good while, monitoring for content that seemed relevant to the phenomena of the emotional bond. I was guided in this regard by participant comments specifying that certain experiences were judged to be moments of emotional connection or closeness, or by content that seemed to signal an affective tone related in some way to the significant partner. In particular I tracked and made note of content that was more experientially and concretely formed (i.e. expressed in a story-like autobiographical form). After participants completed their first narrative commentary I would draw them back to content that I had tagged as possibly relevant and asked for elaboration of the experience. The remainder of each interview typically followed the practice of following up on intuitively appealing content and asking for more concrete descriptions, as well as prompting for descriptions of additional experiences of emotional connection or closeness.

Most participants initially displayed difficulty reflecting on their relationships at the level of experience, and commented on the challenge of the task at various points throughout the interview. Often simply encouraging these men to talk about their relationships generated content related to the phenomenon in question; however, it was also often necessary to persist at prompting them to recall concrete experiences of emotional connection or closeness. Many times participants would identify an occasion when they experienced emotional connection or closeness, but did so by simply reporting on it in a factual and somewhat detached manner. Consequently they were encouraged to recall the events in a more concrete fashion, suggesting that they do so as if they were reliving the event, or prompting them to recall subjective experiences at the time (i.e. thoughts, feelings, sensations, sounds, images, or other memories).

The primary focus of the interview was aimed at the current relationship; however, participants also provided descriptions of experience from previous marriages and cohabiting relationships. In the course of inquiry about emotional connection and closeness participants provided descriptions of a range of relational experiences that extended beyond the phenomenon of emotional closeness. Descriptions of experience varied in richness among participants. Some men provided a limited number of descriptions specific to the experience of emotional connection and closeness that were sparsely elaborated. Nonetheless, most participants provided numerous concrete descriptions expressed in an enlivened and passionate manner. All participants appeared to enjoy the interview and most commented as such. Many reported finding the interview process quite novel, stating that they hand not previously reflected on themselves or their relational experience in such a focused manner.

Data Analysis

Investigation of the experience of the emotional bond was guided by the "Reflective Empirical" procedures for phenomenological research outlined by Wertz (1983; 1984). The first phase in data analysis focused consecutively on the discrete experience of individual participants outlined in their respective interview transcripts. This was conducted as follows.

1) The audiotape and transcript were simultaneously reviewed to get a general feel for the tone of the interview and the texture of the data.

2) In the initial reading and frequent re-reading of the transcript, narrative content was highlighted as potentially relevant and meaningful.

3) Using a word processor each interview transcript was then placed in a two-column format with the interview text placed on the left. In a line-by-line analysis meaning units were identified. Each meaning unit was reflected upon, and paraphrased in a descriptive statement reflecting the unfolding thematic structure and typed in the right-hand column. A thorough screening for relevant and irrelevant content was undertaken in this fashion.

4) Designation of relevant meaning units was established by identifying content that qualified as concrete descriptions of experience (i.e. expressed in a story-like autobiographical form), content specifically identified by participants as germane to the emotional bond, content that reflected affective tone detected on audiotape or the verbal expression in text, and my intuitive hunches that content might have potential relevance.

5) Formulation of paraphrases in the right-hand column required a deep empathic reflection on the meaning of discrete statements. This was a time consuming exercise in which an attempt was made to pause and dwell in the experience implied by each meaning unit with a kind of experiential perspective taking. In this there was an attempt to inhabit the feel of discrete participant experiences and grasp their inherent meaning. This was aided by generating an intense receptive interest in the specific concrete experience, reflecting on the experience within the context that it occurred, then drawing the experience out of that context and amplifying it in a more objective fashion as a potential aspect the emotional bond experience.

6) The meaning units contained in each participant protocol were then analyzed to identify recurring and interrelated themes. Tentative names and descriptions were given to those themes that intuitively illuminated the experience of the emotional bond. The thematic organization that emerged represented the "Individual Psychological Structure" (1983, p. 204) of the experience of the emotional bond for each participant.

In the second phase an across-participant analysis was undertaken that illuminated a "General Psychological Structure" intended to capture the diversity and generality of the Individual Psychological Structures (Wertz, 1983, pp. 227-235). This was undertaken as follows.

1) A review of all twelve individual psychological structures was undertaken to identify shared themes. Through reflection and empathic dwelling in the experiences inherent in shared themes, a general thematic structure was extracted. Explication of the initial version of the general thematic structure was facilitated by tentatively viewing each individual psychological structure as though they were in their entirety instances of a more general psychological phenomenon. Reflection on the fit between all twelve individual psychological structures helped form the preliminary version of the general psychological structure.

2) Another review of all twelve interviews was undertaken to determine the extent to which the initial general thematic structure fit with that of all participants. Hence, individual thematic structures were compared in order to illuminate the relevance of "convergences and divergences" (Wertz, 1983, p. 230).

3) Individual participant protocols were re-read in an effort to determine if anomalous themes not shared by all participants were actually present in a more subtle form.

4) To further establish the essential aspects of the general psychological structure, different possible formulations of the general psychological structure were considered. With this use of "imaginative variation" (Wertz, 1983, p. 232) an attempt was made to determine which cluster of themes could reflect the experience of this sample of men even though all participants may not have illuminated the entire thematic structure. Consideration was also given to differentiating individual themes from relational phenomena other than the emotional bond. Hence, attempts were made to determine whether specific themes could be better understood as representing other experiences.

5) A final version of the general psychological structure was determined based on the extent to which various themes intuitively illuminated the experience of the emotional bond. Themes were then organized into higher order thematic clusters based on intuitive associations.

6) An exercise of writing and re-writing was undertaken in an effort to accurately describe the discrete themes that make up the general psychological structure. Here attention was given to writing a descriptive account of each theme that represented both the necessary and variable aspects of experience shared by participants and intuited in imaginative variation. This resulted in descriptions of the "essence" of fourteen sub-themes organized in three higher order themes. This was later revised and reorganized to thirteen sub-themes under the same three higher order categories.

Establishing Fidelity

The reflective empirical procedure (Wertz, 1984) undertaken in the present study introduces the potentially confounding variable of the presence of a reflecting researcher. Optimally analysis in this methodology involves psychological reflection on the "data of immediate pretheoretical experience" (p. 32) contained in concrete descriptions provided by participants. Researchers using phenomenological methodology are, however, confronted with the prospect that participant verbal commentaries may not directly convey data reflecting pretheoretical experience. Indeed, Churchill (2000) has outlined the necessity of accommodating "the sometimes dubious nature" of participant comments (p. 47), by reflecting on the intentional meaning of such comments. Moreover, phenomenological inquiry requires that the researcher "reads between the lines" (Osbourne, 1990) - beyond the surface structure of language to the "deep structure of meaning" (p. 85).

The complication in this process of psychological reflection and intuiting of meaning is that the researcher may "read the data as the devil reads the bible" (Osbourne, 1990, p. 87). Indeed, researchers in phenomenological methodology face the challenge of "reading too much into the phenomenon or not seeing enough" (Seamon, 1983, p. 122). The mandate of scientific rigor in phenomenological inquiry requires, therefore, that grounds be established to evaluate the validity of the obtained psychological structure. In this regard Osbourne (1990) outlined conditions for evaluating the validity of phenomenological research. In short, validity is sought through "goodness of fit" (p. 87) evaluations obtained from participants, the "juridical process" (p. 88) of peer review, non-participant validation of the thematic structure, and the practice of bracketing.

In the present study participants were invited to review the psychological structure obtained in order to comment on the goodness of fit with their experience of the emotional bond. A text package was prepared that provided a written description of the psychological structure (see Appendix Four). It included a summary and outline of the structure of the higher order and sub-themes. Instruction was given to reflect on how well the descriptions matched their experience, if at all.

On initial follow-up nine participants were contacted by telephone and indicated their willingness to undertake this validation exercise. One participant who relocated to another part of the country was contacted by email. Two participants were unresponsive to telephone calls inviting them to review the results. The ten participants contacted accepted the invitation to provide feedback on the psychological structure. Participants were offered the opportunity to do so by first receiving a copy of the psychological structure, reviewing it at their leisure, and then providing feedback. The text of the psychological structure was delivered to participants by their chosen medium of email, mail, fax, and personal delivery. In turn they were offered the opportunity to provide goodness of fit evaluations by meeting in person to discuss their feedback, discuss it over the telephone, or provide it in written form conveyed by email, mail or fax. Seven of these participants chose to receive the descriptions of the psychological structure by email, with six indicating a desire to respond in that medium. One received the description of the psychological structure by fax, another by mail, and another by personal delivery.

Notwithstanding the stated willingness to partake in the validity process, only three participants provided goodness of fit evaluations on the initial call for feedback. One participant opted to meet in person to discuss his response within a week of receiving the document, while the remaining two took some months to respond via their chosen medium of email. In view of the poor response rate, a second invitation to provide validation feedback was extended by telephone and email to participants. Three more participants provided validation responses through their chosen medium of email, one over the telephone, and another in person. Two participants ultimately declined further involvement in the study. The two participants who had previously been unresponsive to efforts to contact them by telephone where successfully contacted on this second effort. They agreed to provide validity feedback via personal interview; however, one of the participants eventually provided feedback by email and the other failed to respond even to further telephone inquiries. Hence, two participants were ultimately unresponsive to contact efforts in this second follow-up request.

In total, eight participants provided validation feedback (see Goodness of Fit Evaluations, p. 180). For their convenience two participants asked to meet in a restaurant where we nonetheless obtained satisfactory privacy. Each of these meetings continued for upwards to two hours as each went over the psychological structure in some detail. In the course of these meetings I made notes to document participant responses. Both participants had obviously put a good deal of effort into the task and had reviewed the psychological structure in some detail. They came prepared with their own written comments, and one participant gave me his notes for reference. On the whole these two participants displayed a good deal of enthusiasm about the results and seemed to enjoy the exercise.

In the five goodness of fit responses provided through email participants returned the document forwarded to them and inserted their comments in the document in various ways. Most participants appeared to have gone through the thematic description with some thoroughness. Comments varied from simple confirmation or disconfirmation of the experience, confirmation or disconfirmation with brief explanation, to more elaborate explanation of their experience. The one participant who responded by telephone spoke with some enthusiasm about the overall accuracy of the psychological structure reviewed, but provided little other commentary or feedback.

Bracketing

A key condition for considering validity involves the process of bracketing researcher presuppositions. Once again the method of phenomenological psychology takes into account the presence of the investigator in the research process (Ashworth, 1996; Osbourne, 1990). In the service of credibly and accurately describing the lived experience of a phenomenon suspension of researcher presupposition is sought. The exercise of bracketing endeavours to set aside researcher presuppositions in order to allow the best approximation of the undistorted lived experience to emerge from phenomenological investigation. The significance of bracketing is established in selecting the phenomenon of inquiry, interviewing, as well as the process of reflection and analysis.

The first presupposition encountered in the present investigation concerns the selection of the emotional bond as the phenomenon of interest. In undertaking this study the necessary assumption was that the lived-world of men contains the experience of some form of affectively tinged connection or bond with their female partner. As previously discussed, this is a presupposition founded in a good deal of psychological theory and quantitative research that may seem quite detached from the lived-world that phenomenology turns to. Still, the relational-emotional experience of men is arguably a reasonable domain of inquiry and the phenomenon has to be named in some form. As Ashworth (1996) points out there is "an inescapable limitation to bracketing" (p. 13) in this aspect of the phenomenological method. Notwithstanding the significance of suspending presuppositions, the focus of a phenomenological inquiry has to be "introduced to the interviewee as being 'about' something" without which interviews would be "directionless" (p. 13).

The position taken in the present inquiry was that asking about the experience of emotional connection or closeness serves the need to generate descriptive experiences of men's relational-emotional lives. Nonetheless, bracketing required careful interviewing and reading of phenomenal descriptions that did not project emotion, connection, or closeness that is not truly embedded in the experiences of participants. Indeed, I had to be prepared for what seemed like a highly unlikely prospect that men would not inform relationality or the emotional bond in a meaningful way.

Potentially problematic presuppositions are also implicit in what was more a hope than an established assumption that men are more relationally and emotionally sophisticated than gender stereotyping typically conveys. As a clinician who works with a great many men, often in the context of relationality, the stereotypical view of the non-relational man seems at times to be an unjustified maligning of men. My experience is that men are and can be much more deeply emotional and relational that popular stereotype conveys. Moreover, I am quite troubled by the prevalence of male-bashing (largely) by women in the professional and social spheres that I inhabit. Ultimately, as a man and on behalf of men I find it disturbing to be implicated in both the stereotypical portrayal of masculinity and what appears to be both an overt and subtle campaign to condemn masculinity. As a casual advocate for a more humanistic viewing of men and masculinity it was necessary to suspend these concerns and stay open to the prospect that stereotypical and non-relational masculinity could be revealed. In this regard care had to be taken regarding my expectation that men's experience of the emotional bond may be affectively intense and rich.

It is necessary in the present inquiry to extend bracketing to the effects of psychological knowledge that I have been exposed to in my professional development and clinical practice. Particular care was necessary regarding the extent that attachment theory has guided my thinking in both personal and professional aspects. The challenge in this study was to let prospective features associated with attachment unfold plausibly, if indeed they are present. Most important was to acknowledge that I expected male participants would illuminate the attachment principles of secure base and/or felt security in some manner. In setting out to undertake this study I had little insight into presuppositions regarding how understanding of the emotional bond would unfold, if indeed it were to be revealed. Similarly, theoretical influences relating to attachment concepts of comfort with closeness, avoidance, and attachment anxiety necessarily warranted suspension in conducting this study.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RESULTS

A "General Psychological Structure" (Wertz, 1983; 1984) of emotional bond was obtained that captured the essence of men's experience of emotional bond across their adult lifespan. For some participants this structure reflected their experience over a single marriage, for others across several marriages or cohabiting relationships. The structure of the experience of emotional bond was composed of three higher order themes identified respectively as *Settling-In, Joining, and Surviving the Journey*. *Settling-In* represents the core and immediate experience of the emotional bond and is composed of three sub-themes. *Joining* elaborates on the experience of emotional bond and effectively describes experience of the conditions under which it unfolds. Hence, the six sub-themes of Joining help capture the complete essence of the emotional bond.

Surviving the Journey describes the experience of challenges confronted in establishing and maintaining the emotional bond. This theme is a somewhat unexpected outcome. Arguably Surviving the Journey extends beyond the intention of this study to illuminate the experience of emotional bond and could have been left out of the analysis. The four sub-themes of which Surviving the Journey is composed proved to be such prominent aspects of some participant descriptions that it was considered important to include them in the analysis. Moreover, Surviving the Journey seemed to provide an important contribution to illuminating broader aspects of the masculine relational domain.

The Higher Order Theme of Settling-In

This higher order theme represents the core and immediate experience of the emotional bond and is composed of three sub-themes: Contentment, Hardiness, and Presence. Hence, in the Settling-In of the emotional bond men obtain a sense of comfort and contentment that generates a sense of authority in one's life. Settling-in is obtained in special moments of relational engagement, but it endures as a subtle sense of presence.

The Contentment Theme

In the emotional bond men obtain a sense of arrival in a place of comfort and well-being. As participants articulated, what to many seemed to be an ineffable and indescribable experience, they invariably ended their search for adequate descriptions with a definitive settling on adjectives reflecting Contentment. A sense of certainty often punctuated the uttering of words like calm, comfortable, contented, relief, relaxed, peaceful, freeing, soothing, warmth, satisfied.

Tim likened his experience of the emotional bond to sitting by the fire "wearing a comfy sweater and slippers after you get out of a bath tub." Peter spoke of "a soothing sensation of peace" that he associated with images of water and sea. Referring to an experience on the day of the interview he resorted to a description of a seaside beach, emphasizing "the soothing feel of the sand and the warmth of the sun." In another image Peter described the "peace of mind" obtained as he and his wife respectively opened their own doors to a small but uncongested space, "and us meeting in a place that's warm and comforting."

Chris was explicit in naming the experience of the emotional bond in terms of contentment. "Maybe just content. Content. That's probably a good word. Content. I think I was a reasonably happy guy before that, but I don't know that I was content." Reflecting on several experiences of the emotional bond Chris elaborated on Contentment. "It's that same feeling of content, happy, like satisfied. I don't know if you have to be happy all the time, but if you're content, not wanting really."

John captured the experience of emotional bond with the simple notion of comfort. "That's when I feel comfortable with her." He found it necessary to clarify the experience. "Comfort is often taken negatively. You hear people talk of not wanting to be just comfortable in a relationship, because that means that you don't end this relationship because it's comfortable. But that's not where I'm going with comfortable. It's when I feel at peace." Adrian described his experience succinctly as comfort. "It's comfortable. I'm glad I'm here." Guy also settled on comfort, the experience of which seemed to support an otherwise tumultuous marriage. "I felt at ease. I felt comfortable." The settling-in of Contentment unfolded in Karl's description. "There's just a feeling of peace. There's someone that you're really at-one-with. And you're comfortable being with that person."

Rod specified the condition of exclusivity in Contentment as "a feeling that I have with her that I don't have with anybody else." He elaborated on this aspect of the emotional bond. "It's the peace you get from it. It's almost like a serenity kind of thing, that soothingness of it. The energy from it. Not an electric jolt or something, but like a nice warm energy that you can feel. Sometimes physically you can feel it." Brad described a similar tangible quality to Contentment. "I feel like I could grab it almost. There's a smoothness to it."

Reflecting on the role of aroma in activating the emotional bond, Rod illuminated the theme of Contentment. "It's satisfying. It eases some kind of tension." During prolonged separations aroma reminders would rekindle the experience of Contentment. "It was a comfort thing for sure. I'd say it definitely eased you. It relaxed me. In a way it almost makes things more concrete again."

As one participant who portrayed himself as the stereotypical emotionally stoic man, Mike referred to the concept of love to describe his experience of relational bond, but articulated it in terms of Contentment. "It's comfort. It's peace of mind. The ease of Contentment was intuited from Brad's description of the emotional bond as "like a hug" with a nondescript feeling in the chest, and more poignantly illustrated in his analogy of holding a baby. In an exceptional occurrence Brad reported that he felt the emotional bond with his wife as the interview unfolded, describing it as "a feeling presence of her in a hug."

Contentment as Relief

A sense of relief coincides with Contentment. John illuminated this experience. "Those are the only times in my life I can relax, lose my stress, forget about all the little things that bother me day to day. I tend to carry work problems with me. Without any effort on my part, those things seem to disappear without a trace." Tim described a similar relief from gender role identity. "Sometimes it's a release of trying to be the man and carrying that image. Because I still do that. I still suit up. Suck it up. Show up for the show. Sometimes that becomes a veneer that needs to be scraped away. Sometimes she scrapes that away and that's a great feeling of relief. It's like oh god!" In the context of feeling understood and supported by his wife, Chris experienced Contentment in this fashion. "What it feels like is relief – you let out a big breath."

Contentment as Fulfillment

A sense of fulfillment unfolds in the theme of Contentment. You feel more complete. Tim quoted Sylvester Stallone in the movie Rocky, who when asked by his trainer why he likes his girlfriend answered, "She fills gaps." For Tim the significance of fulfillment extended to the strengthening of his self-worth and the insight that "at one time in my life I don't know that I would have gotten what I have - I was moving totally in a different direction." The condition of fulfillment was reflected in Tim's "desire to have that kind of comfort" and "to know that that is enough." This was contrasted with his experience of addiction, where "for a lot of addicts, it's never enough."

Peter emphasized the special relational fulfillment of Contentment. "I really feel tremendous fulfillment when her and I are connecting. It's something that I have not got anywhere else, not from buying toys or having a new vehicle." Describing the experience of Contentment early in his relationship Chris illuminated the complimentary condition of fulfillment. "I wasn't an unhappy guy before that, but I think I lightened up a little bit. It was a nice compliment to something that I didn't have before."

The fulfillment that coincided with Contentment extended to "personal identity" for Rod. "So much of what defines me comes from her, from being with her, and comes from wanting to be with her." Referring to the "good feeling" that accompanies this identity fulfillment Rod spoke of a sense of completion. "It makes you more complete. It makes you as an individual maybe more well rounded. It's like the extra things that you kind of need to be better, than maybe you are on your own." Reminiscent of fulfillment was Rod's experience of intellectual broadening. "The intellectual part was a big thing for me. To find that someone had matched me or could challenge me. Could they make me think? Could they challenge my perceptions and actually make me want to think? It makes you kind of open up you boundaries."

Brad illuminated the significance of fulfillment when reflecting on the absence of Contentment. "Well for me it's very much a yearning. Because I spent my life wanting to be close to people." Parallel to Tim's reference to the insatiable addict, Brad's yearning for the fulfillment of Contentment "starts to become for food, it becomes for sex, alcohol, that sort of thing." When Brad referred to the presence of the emotional bond the condition of fulfillment was implicit in his assertion that it is "not the yearning."

Contentment as Authenticity

In the emotional bond a space is made for authenticity. Tim observed, "There was something very different about it, something very honest and very real." Of his childhood family circumstances Tim shared that "we lived and I learned how to lie and I lived as a liar." With Contentment in place Tim celebrated the opportunity to be real. "It makes me know I don't have to lie, to know I cannot lie, know I can be honest. It makes me know that I can be close and I can be comforting and soft and cry and be real – that I can be who I am." As a recovering addict "a sense of freeing" marked Guy's experience of Contentment. "There's freedom involved. And the freedom comes from – I spent my life not telling people what I was up to and playing things very close, keeping things very close, lots of trust issues, slow to let people in." In the embrace of the emotional bond "it's hard to live in that vacuum . . . it becomes harder to fool these people."

Outlining the ease of being authentic Rod observed, "You don't have to concern yourself with necessarily acting a certain way." John illuminated the significance of relief obtained in authenticity. "I spend a lot of time concerned, am I doing the right thing in this relationship? Am I going to piss her off in the next five minutes? When I'm comfortable I have no concern for that. That's when I feel I can really open up. These are times when I don't have to censor myself."

In Contentment the freedom to be authentic means that you can make mistakes without retribution. In Adrian's experience there was an "understanding that you can do wrong and still everything will be all right." He spoke of "the comfort" that accrued from relinquishing relational "games" of winning, losing, blaming, and using lingering resentments to hurt one another. "That game doesn't have to happen. You can actually say the way you feel. She can upset me or I can upset her by saying the way I feel about something, and I know that it's not going to wreck everything. And in fact it's not even going to wreck the whole day. If it does wreck the whole day, there's always tomorrow."

Authenticity unfolded for Chris in the context of feeling safe to reveal and express vulnerable emotions. Emotionally restrained in public Chris felt that he could display emotions to his wife. "With my wife I feel safe. If I experienced a loss I would try and hide that it bugged me. I'm not a big crier. But if I had to cry I would cry with my wife. I would talk to my wife. I'd yell. I'd do whatever I had to do to let her know that something was bugging me." More positive in tone Karl illuminated authenticity as a sense of freedom to reveal himself, "telling her I love her and telling her very intimate things and how much I appreciate her."

Don described “the feeling that I could not be myself” in previous relationships. In his present relationship being real was accepted. “We both appreciate the other person for being the way they are. Neither of us is expecting the other person to change for our benefit. We’ve both been in relationships in the past where the other person wanted us to be a different person. It didn’t work.” Even Mike illuminated the condition of authenticity in Contentment. “You don’t feel the need to be something you’re not. You can be who you are and you’re accepted.”

Contentment as Emotional Freeing

The authenticity of Contentment coincides with the freedom to feel and express one’s own emotions. It is possible then for men to cry. In Contentment men may be more attuned to their emotional states and feel freer to express them. During those “special situations” in which the emotional bond was activated John found that sensory and affective awareness were heightened. “I’m a lot more open to my surroundings and take in what’s going on around me. Those are the times when I actually think about my feelings a lot more.”

At critical points where Tim’s wife was supportive and validated his worth, Tim “broke down and cried.” Here he described a “pure joy that it’s good, that this is real, that it’s okay to emote, to feel the sense of joy.” Also illuminating a certain joyfulness Chris elaborated on the condition of emotional freeing. “You feel lighter. In those instances you feel a little butterfliee. You get that little wave. It’s almost like you want to cry because your eyes might even well up.”

In his first marriage Brad described the opposite condition of contained emotional authenticity. “Tears, the crying, the ability to cry, any of that, it was very solid and blocked. I lived with my ex-wife for close to ten years and never cried." Having established an emotional bond in his current marriage Brad experienced the liberty to feel and express emotions. "It's not like I'm crying a lot these days. But it certainly wouldn't be that I wouldn't ever feel tears or sadness and allow that come. But I know that in my previous relationship it was not there. It was solid and locked."

Contentment as Experiential Enrichment

In Contentment experience may be heightened. When discussing the role of touch in Contentment Karl described "a feeling that all's right with your world - it's a kind of feeling of peace." Distinguishing this experience from sex, he clarified the enrichment of Contentment as "a sensual feeling" that stimulates your sense of feel just the way a beautiful flower stimulates your sense of sight or smell." When talking about the importance of touch in establishing Contentment, John spoke of the experience of sensory enrichment where "he would "notice the birds and the trees."

Keeping the significance of other in mind, John extended experiential enrichment to being "more aware of her presence and what she's feeling." It is a time when "I also take notice of her and her beauty. It always increases my attraction to her." In a relationship where everyday affairs were punctuated by a relative emotional detachment John noticed that there is a "presence at these times" where she seemed more emotionally attuned to him. "She's paying attention. She's inquiring more about my thoughts, about what we're seeing, what we're doing. To me I take that as acceptance. Somebody caring about me again." This is "a time when I can really let go and can feel comfortable with her, when I can trust her more than I do on a day to day basis."

Emotional Activation in Contentment

The experience of Contentment is qualitatively significant, but quantitatively unremarkable. Several participants described experiences of intense emotion that seem relevant to development of the emotional bond, but do not necessarily constitute the proper experience of it. Indeed, the trend was for participants to clarify the relatively low level of emotional activation germane to the theme of Contentment.

In important relational moments such as initial romantic infatuation, lovemaking, pregnancy, birth of children, or significant demonstrations of support, more intense positive affective responses occurred. These are times when men may express strong feelings of happiness or tears of joy. Rod illuminated this experience. "It can be so overwhelming that it just consumes you almost, where you say, wow, like if this wasn't here there would be nothing." He clarified that this was an unusual occurrence. "It doesn't come that often that strong. Sometimes if you're just in the right mode, sometimes you'll get that feeling. And it's just like, Jesus, this is pretty strong."

The more common and enduring experience of the emotional bond had a subdued quality consistent with the tone of Contentment. Although he also described relational moments filled with more intense joyful feelings, Tim clarified that the experience of the emotional bond is "more of a relaxed, mellow" condition. "It's not euphoric." Moreover, Tim was cautious about the significance of ecstatic feelings in relationship. "I don't want a stagnant fairy tail kind of love because that's not real. I mean it's good in the moment. It's wonderful in the moment, but that's not life. It becomes deeper and we become closer and we understand each other." During the formative period of his relationship Peter recounted that "it was exciting to date." However, he contrasted that with the "more fulfilling" and less superficial conditions of the mature emotional bond presently experienced.

The Allure of Contentment

There is a sense of arrival and an allure in the theme of Contentment. Peter was particularly emphatic about the enlivening condition of arrival and allure. "You feel very trusting. You feel very alive inside. You feel that this is right. Without a doubt this is where we should be and this is where I want to stay. This is where I want to be. You know there's nothing like it. It's a place where you don't want to leave. You want to stay there and you want that to continue."

Resorting to imagery Peter described the experience of allure in Contentment as a warm, soothing experience akin to being on a beach. "It's a very peaceful place where you want to spend a long time. You don't ever want to leave. But for that particular moment you don't think about, well, what happens the next time. I'm not going to trust the next time. It's all forgotten." When reflecting on the experience of emotional bond the day of the interview Peter elaborated on the sense of allure. "You know what? I want to talk to her. I want to be around her. And it's almost luring. It's scary. So I want to call her back."

Dismayed by the continual strengthening of the emotional bond, Rod described the sense of allure. "It's almost like an urgency thing. Like where you're thinking, I'm glad I have this now or I need it. And you need more. It's kind of like a vacuum almost." Chris recounted the allure of Contentment early in his relationship. "I got to the point where when I wasn't with her I'd ask myself, what would I rather be doing, what I'm doing right now or would I rather be home doing nothing with her? My answer on most occasions was I'd rather be home doing nothing with her."

Tim situated the experience of arrival and the appeal of Contentment partly in the home. "It's contentment being with her and being at home with my family now." There it demanded a permanence that he was reluctant to relinquish. "I like that feeling. It's like I can do this. I want to keep this. This is real." The significance of homecoming in Contentment was illuminated by Peter's comment, "I like to be able to want to go home." In contrast, when the emotional bond is absent or wavering home had no allure for him. Adrian shared this sentiment early in his marriage when strife predominated. "I don't want to be here." Having negotiated early relational barriers Adrian described a similar sense of arrival. "I'm glad to be here. I'm glad that I met her."

With a prior history of brief superficial sexual relationships even Guy illuminated the sense of arrival and allure. Having first developed a nonsexual relationship with his wife, when they finally made love Guy experienced what was for him the unusual experience of emotion and the urge to stay. "It wasn't the sense of wanting to run as soon as we were done. I didn't want to leave the bed. I didn't want to be somewhere else."

The Essence of Contentment

The Contentment theme most directly describes the immediate unfolding of the experience of the emotional bond. In the presence of the emotional bond men obtain a sense of arrival in a place of comfortable well-being and fulfillment that also enlivens and enriches life. Predominantly there is a simple calming blended with the more exciting and energizing flavour of joyful enthusiasm that remains contained in the mantle of peaceful serenity.

A sigh of relief conveys the impression of completion where the pressures of being-in-the-world fade. Striving is relinquished. You can rest and relax. The worries of the world dissipate and the comfortable ease of authentic being establishes. The need to "censor" who you are is suspended and you can "really open up." A more whole and positive sense of self emerges in the shadow of feeling that you are important to someone.

With the perspective that "all is right with your world," the significance of the relational domain is illuminated. There is "a feeling of peace" and "comfortable being with" your partner. The durability of the bond feels assured. An effortless harmony of being "at one" with her unfolds, where self-other boundaries blur. As the pressures of relating and being dissipate, synchronicity emerges where "everything just kind of flows."

There is a sense of homecoming as though completing an arduous journey in search of this very condition. The experience of arrival in this "right place" underscores the significance of unrivaled and indisputable certainty of "belonging" with her. Once obtained, the condition of Contentment is consuming and alluring. It holds you in its grasp and engenders a thirst for more. You want to be at-home with her, "you want to be there." It demands a permanence that you are reluctant to relinquish.

The Hardiness Theme

Hardiness at Being-In-The-World

When describing his experience of Contentment Chris illuminated the corresponding experience of relief from the stress of being. "I feel light, lighter. I feel more confident. I feel like I could do anything. I think I can do this. Like I'm okay at the game of life.

I'm doing all right. I've got lots of good things going for me." John echoed this sentiment. "It's when I feel at peace. That leaves me in a position to take on the world and be more confident." In this regard Nick drew on his experience of making love. "You can face the world, do battle in the world and be still standing."

John outlined the breadth of Hardiness as extending to his work. "It just makes work easier. I can concentrate more. When I'm happy with her it makes my workdays easier. I feel I can dedicate myself to work for the eight hours I need to, knowing I can come home and see her. When I'm not happy - when we're fighting or even just times when we haven't been close for a long time - I'll have a hard time concentrating on work and I'll dwell on that all day long, dwell on her and our relationship all day."

Supported Hardiness

Adrian reflected on Hardiness that coincided with Contentment, and accrued from the experiences of support from his wife. "You notice when you sleep better at night. Or when you sit back and you say right, that's it then. I'm just going to go and have a drink now and everything's fine. It's that sort of closure with that situation. Yup, this is what I'm going to do." With a sense of "security" drawn from support, challenges at work become manageable. "You walk in with that preset what you're going to do. And for whatever reason everything falls into place because you are in control. And you can feel that I'm going to be in control with that decision you made to get there. And I think that when I'm talking with her about stuff like that, that helps me get to that decision. And then I'm feeling in control again."

Elaborating on what he identified as the "security" that accrued from Contentment, Peter illuminated the experience of Hardiness. "There's a certain amount of excitement that goes with that. I mean you feel cheery inside. Somehow those cares that maybe got you to where you were are forgotten instantly. Like it's out. You feel really good inside. You feel that you can conquer anything. You're strong." For Peter Hardiness unfolded in the shadow of her support. "She's really good at that, at saying things to encourage me or to admire me. That really makes me tick. I don't know if I want to say that, but maybe she gets the best out of me – somehow the best of me comes out."

Relational Hardiness

Although the experience of Hardiness referred primarily to a general capacity to handle the task of life, it also referred to strengthening of the ability to negotiate the challenges of relationality. Peter illuminated this relational Hardiness in the context of Contentment. "The more times you go there, the more times you want to go there, but the stronger you get. The conflicts are still there but you treat them differently. You have a way that you never had before that you're able to get back into that right relationship a lot quicker."

Citing a line from the movie As Good As It Gets - where Jack Nicholson tells Helen Hunt, "You make me want to be a better man" - Tim described how relational support in the emotional bond engendered the experience of Hardiness. "It makes me feel good. I actually feel very happy, very capable as a human being, that I can continue to grow without having fear - which has been a big part of my life, stopped me, held me back, beat me up, thinking I'm dumb and stupid." Having a prominent family and personal history of infidelity in close relationships Tim illustrated the continuing effect of relational Hardiness. "Sometimes that doubt comes into my mind. And the fact that she makes me want to be a better man gives me a whole lot of hope that I won't move in that direction. It gives me the courage that I won't live that kind of lie."

The Essence of Hardiness

Exposed to the Contentment of the emotional bond self-assurance emerges that establishes Hardiness in negotiating the challenges of the world. With the foundation of Contentment in place and the weight of being-in-the-world is lifted, a remarkable yet simple empowerment emerges in the feeling "that you can conquer anything." The task of being-in-the-world is made manageable.

The Presence Theme

The theme of Presence was illuminated in the comments of some participants; however, it was sensed intuitively in interviews that did not contain concrete descriptions. Following on this hunch, participants were explicitly asked about their experience of the Presence of the emotional bond during the interview.

Rod provided the descriptive key to the Presence of the emotional bond as "definitely always there – overriding." He spoke of times when his wife is physically absent. "It's easy to tell when she' not there. Then you realize the absence. It's just one more bit of evidence that it's there all the time. But I think you can always tell it's there because it's just different, it's a different feeling." Peter's account of the allure of the emotional bond illuminated the contrasting condition of instability in the Presence of the emotional bond. "It's a place where you don't want to leave. You want to stay there and you want that to continue. But in reality there's always problems or things that come up that almost disrupt that feeling."

In Rod's description of the allure of the emotional bond the lingering sense of absence is illuminated. "But you almost get the thoughts again, like it's almost like the opposite thoughts where you might think more about, like I said, what if I didn't have it." In this paradoxical state "it gets overwhelming and you kind of think, how great it is, but at the same time you're thinking, yeah, it's the urgency and it's the need to hold it and the need to keep it. Saying, wow, I don't want to lose this feeling. That's kind of what you're thinking. This would just be the shits without it. And I don't want to lose it."

The Essence of Presence

The Contentment of the emotional bond is experienced as a richly endowed momentary phenomenon and/or a subtle continuous affair lingering on the edge of awareness. There is a sustained everyday presence of Contentment in the emotional bond with few occasions where it is not "flowing well." Thus the emotional bond is experienced as a subtle ever present and superseding feeling that is "definitely always there." Concurrently it consists of and is maintained by the occurrence of more intense episodes of memorable and consuming Contentment.

In the Presence of Contentment there is a contrasting effect where the experience of bond absence can be entertained. It is as though you cannot know one without the other. Even in the hold of Contentment knowledge of its potential loss is not far removed. Remembrance of the foregoing struggle to bond seems to add to the sense of relief and the certainty that this is the preferred domain. The backdrop of emotional discomfort and distress in the absence of emotional bond informs the significance and nature of well-formed emotional bond contained in Contentment.

The Higher Order Theme of Joining

In this higher order theme the experience of emotional bond is elaborated. It effectively describes the experience of the conditions under which the emotional bond unfolds. Hence, the five sub-themes of Joining help capture the complete essence of the emotional bond as something captured in special moments of engagement, the condition of being thoroughly known by someone and knowing them just as thoroughly, the condition of establishing and sharing a common ground of being-in-the-world, sharing the lived world with someone special, having a sense of security in the presence and support of another, and negotiating the task of opening up to the intimacy of the emotional bond itself.

The Bonding Space Theme

Most prominently the emotional bond unfolds and is sustained in the ordinary affairs of being together. It is nurtured by exchanges of affection, touch, gaze, and dialogue. For Karl the Bonding Spaced occurred in the simple act of "going someplace, sitting in the car, just reaching out and touching each other." On those occasions "it's just an affectionate touch" with the accompaniment of dialogue where "we listen to each other." The Bonding Spaces was similar for Adrian. "In the kitchen with a hug or something like that. There are some days you just feel like that. You just feel like holding hands more or sitting closer together, or in a restaurant, sitting beside instead of across."

The significance of "just little things" announced the presence of the emotional bond for Chris. "It's when you're taking your kids out and they're just having a ball and we look at each other and we smile and we laugh because we've created these two little ones. You don't have to say anything. You just smile." Chris clarified that "sometimes it's in the context of the family and sometimes it's just her and me." On vacations the texture of the Bonding Space can be simple, "just hanging out and holding hands."

The Bonding Space can be activated by something about her. For Karl it was "the way she smiles - the way her face lights up when she's happy." Here your own spirits are lifted. "When she smiles the whole world lights up and basically that's the way I still feel and I love to see her smile and laugh." Illuminating the Contentment theme John also situated the Bonding Space in physical contact. "I like to touch. I like to be touched. That's where I get my closeness from - when I feel comfortable."

John found the emotional bond activated in opportunities to travel that were "more than just for entertainment – it's for closeness." These were opportunities to escape the distractions of career and to focus on the emotional bond. "At that point we're kind of taking in the whole English countryside. I think that's where the closeness started to develop. Traveling across the countryside that day, we tend to get back into being close too." John illuminated both the simplicity and the significance of the emotional bond. "Oh simple things, holding hands in the car. Talking about our relationship again. Taking in the beautiful surroundings." The Bonding Space can occur in less exotic locales. "Out at the lake. Lying on the raft. Hot summer sun. My problems go away. Those are times when we can sit there in quiet peacefulness." Nick and his wife intentionally created a Bonding Space in special monthly outings where there was just the two of them. Simple exchanges of affection would mark the occasion, "holding hands, touching each other." Free of worry about children, activity during those special times seemed equally unremarkable. "And so we'll go to a movie, or just walk the mall, or we'll walk the river valley." At these times a relational dialogue imbues the experience of the emotional bond with verbal expressions of affection, and reunion conversation. "That's when we can talk about how much we love each other."

Significant child related events often constituted the Bonding Space. For Mike this was one of the few positive events that he associated with the emotional bond. "The birth of the children was probably something that brought us together. Probably the closest I've felt would have been the birth of our first daughter." Mike was an unusual participant who placed the Bonding Space predominantly in the context of strife. "When I think of the emotional bond that we have, I automatically seem to try to relate it to strife that you've had. We haven't really emotionally had a whole lot of things that brought us together. I mean there's occasions, but I mean they're all related to something bad." When one of his children succumbed to a life threatening illness Mike considered that this was a time when emotional closeness was significant for him. "What more emotional thing do you need in the family to get you close." Brad's descriptions also illuminated the unfolding of the emotional bond in the context of "going through some of the trials and tribulations" related to the death of a child, handling the complexities of an expanding family and special needs children, and negotiating the relational barriers to the emotional bond.

As Chris informed us, the unfolding of the Bonding Space may occur in the silence of duress. "The closeness, sometimes it's not words. Sometimes if I come home - something at work that's really quite awful. And I come home. Sometimes I just grab her and hug her. And she knows that something went down. If I want to talk about it I'll talk about it and if I don't that's cool. And she doesn't push and I think I feel pretty tight with her then. If I have a particularly bad day with something like that, usually I go straight for my kids and I hang on a little longer than probably I would on a normal day. Then she knows and she just comes."

The Essence of Bonding Space

The experience of the emotional bond is obtained in special places, events, and gestures. These are discrete occasions that are sometimes distinguished in their simplicity. It is found in the little things like the reflected gaze in moments of shared joy, where "you don't have to say anything." It involves simple touching, smiling, and shared contentment – "just hanging out and holding hands." The emotional bond is nurtured in the special relational dialogue about "us" during private time together. It unfolds in the backdrop of shared "quiet peacefulness" of "beautiful surroundings," in special moments with children, as well as the shared experience of trauma and loss.

The Bonding Space is found inadvertently in the course of everyday affairs; however, it has an elusive nature in the relational world of men. Arrival in the Bonding Space is a treasured moment that for some men is increasingly rare as the demands of active living and family consume life.

The Being-Known Theme

Foundation in Being-Known

The significance of Being-Known was reflected in the observation by some participants that first knowing their spouse as a friend seemed to expedite the growth of an emotional bond. For Chris being "friends before being a couple" seemed to accelerate formation of the emotional bond. "From the beginning I had an opportunity to meet her on a different level. So I really felt like I knew her better than I'd known earlier partners. It got us through the initial getting to know each other phase much quicker. It allowed us to put our guards down a little more, be who we are, and I think click maybe emotionally."

Guy spoke of a relational history where he would "get into a sexual relationship very quickly with women and stand there two months later and try to figure out why I didn't like this person very much." In contrast the emotional bond of his present marriage was founded on Being-Known before making love. "I knew her already. It was 3 months of knowing this person and getting to know this person. I had a basis of who she was. I had a basis for her feelings. I had some foresight into what she was about."

Preceded by a series of superficial relationships where he had been unfaithful, the authenticity obtained through Being-Know early in the relationship was a novel experience for Tim. "Sitting down and talking to a person about how they felt about things, how they saw the world, what their future plans were, what were some of their dislikes and likes? I had never done that before. I found that to be a wonderful experience. Being-Known was a condition that sustained the emotional bond. "That is something we still continue to do. As we have grown in our relationship we still continue to talk about our likes and our dislikes, the future, how to raise our children, parenting, working together, people in our lives."

Ultimately the link between Contentment and Being-Known was reflected in Tim's comment that he obtained "a lot of comfort" from knowing his partner. He went on to illuminate the significance of the reciprocal condition of Being-Known by her. "I want to be known. I like that feeling a lot. I like it. It's comfortable. It's who I want to be. I want to be known." Indeed Tim concluded that he aspired to have an emotional bond with his partner founded on a dynamic condition of Being-Known - "in which they understand themselves more and can articulate that to me and I can understand myself more and can articulate that to them."

The Relational Dialogue in Being-Known

Being-Known is constituted in a relational dialogue wherein a more thorough reciprocal understanding of self and other is obtained. Significant personal characteristics and issues are illuminated in the ongoing relational dialogue that helps establish and maintain the emotional bond.

Being-Known for Tim was founded in part on a relational dialogue. "Talking with my partner about fidelity and how important that was to me and wanting to know if that was important to her. We shared that and we still share that." Importantly the relational dialogue may illuminate individual differences that have implications for maintaining the emotional bond. This occurred for Tim when there had been a breach early in the relationship. "We began to talk about our different approaches to life, how we resolve conflicts, children."

Peter described a future oriented relational dialogue that occurred in the embrace of a strong emotional bond. "We talk about the plan. We talk about the future. We talk about where we want to be 2 or 3 years from now." By contrast, when the emotional bond wavers, Peter observed that the relational dialogue lacks depth and future prospect. "When we're stressed we don't often talk about our future plans. We talk about the immediate. It's very, very surfacy. You might not even talk about tomorrow. It seems like when you're not connected you very much talk about just the here and now."

A flurry of stimulating relational dialogue undertaken in the service of Being-Known formed the basis of Rod's relationship. "We kind of dove into a number of different topics, whether it was talking about personal feelings or whatever issues. It got into some things that can normally be quite heated discussions, talking about politics, or talking about normal philosophical things, about religion." The relational dialogue was for Rod an enlivening and growth promoting experience that continued to strengthen the emotional bond. Stimulated by "continually understanding more about the person you're with" Rod found that "every time you might think you know your spouse - because you've been with them for so long - then you always catch these insights or glimpses into what they're maybe thinking, that they haven't said before."

The relational dialogue of Being-Known may simply illuminate positive experiences of Contentment. During special relational times for Nick it is "talk about how much we enjoy this, how nice it is not to have the kids around." The relational dialogue may involve sharing special interests and areas of knowledge. Regarding his understanding of history and music Don obtained "a sense of enjoyment out of showing her these things and explaining these things."

Acceptance and Deepening in Being-Known

In the process of Being-Known the emotional bond is cultivated through understanding and accepting the depth of who you are and where you come from. Indeed, the emotional bond is distinguished as a relinquishing of superficial relating. Contrasting the experience of a previous relationship marked by superficial knowing of one another, Rod spoke of not breaking "beyond that thin little bond."

Karl described the experience of feeling understood and obtaining understanding of her when they visited significant childhood locals. Visiting his boyhood hometown seemed to strengthen the emotional bond through Being-Known. "She sort of saw and sensed the atmosphere in which I grew up. And she really liked it. She really said this is just a wonderful place. This has been a wonderful holiday. And she said, I can just see what it was like for you as a kid growing up here." Returning to old haunts can be disappointing when things seem different. "But going back with her at that time, some of the old fishing boats that I thought were old fishing boats when I was a kid growing up there were still there and they were still using them. We hung around the beach and around the places where we used to hang around. And she loved it. And so that was a time when I felt that there was a really, really close understanding."

In this Karl spoke of a strengthening of the emotional bond that accrued from not only being understood, but also being accepted by his wife. "A person who you know really tries to understand who I am and appreciates who I am. I just felt that she knew me a little better and still liked me, despite having grown up in a little fishing village. She liked it and certainly that made me feel good about myself I guess - sort of an affirmation of who I am." Acceptance in Being-Known also extends to one's foibles. "When you feel that a person knows you and still likes you. I think that's a strength of the bond. Because a lot of times when I try to describe who I am and where I come from and why I am who I am, the good and the bad come along. So that's why I've said several times, when a person knows you better and still likes you."

The reciprocal condition in Being-Known is in understanding her. This extended to Karl's curiosity about her and her childhood origins. "I've been out to where she grew up. We've spent a fair amount of time out there. She didn't really see why I was interested in going there. But I am. I'm always interested there. Because when I go there I sort of envision her as a child growing up there, and what it must have been like. I just feel that maybe I understand her a little bit better because of where she grew up, how she grew up and what makes her the kind of person she is today." In a similar vein, for Guy the depth of Being-Known by his wife unfolded in the meeting of family. "She was the first woman I ever dated that met my mother. And after the meeting she turned to me and said, Oh my god, I can't believe you're the person you are with that being your mother!"

Admiration in Being-Known

In Being-Known a sense of admiration may emerge. Referring to his understanding of the difficulties his wife negotiated through her life, Karl was explicit in declaring this. "Being with a person and knowing what they've had to overcome to be who they are, to me that is a very attractive quality in a person." For some participants the admiration in Being-Known was illuminated in their experience of pride. This was established early and maintained throughout Chris' relationship. "I felt proud. I'm still proud of her. And I'm pretty proud of myself for having a partner like that." Commenting on his wife's career, John outlined his admiration and pride. "She has knowledge and skills that I would never have, doing what she does. So I kind of respect that she has developed those things and utilizes them, where I'll never have that opportunity. I think she puts her heart and soul into what she does and I respect her for that."

The Unspoken Being-Known

The depth of Being-Known allows for an intuitive unspoken understanding of one-another. When work has been particularly stressful Peter goes shopping. "I'll call her. I'll say, do you need anything at the store? And that's kind of a cue to her that, you know what he needs is to get away. He's had a real rough day. And I don't have to actually say, but she'll say, oh yeah, well pickup some salad or whatever." In a lighter vein Mike shared that "we joke about how we'll both think of the same thing, or one of us will say it and the other one will go, oh I was just thinking that."

Rod provided a good deal of description of experiences where he and his wife could intuit one-another's thoughts. Indeed, Rod considered that his own ability to "predict what she's going to say or how she's going to act" was a validation of the strength of the emotional bond. "To me it's great that I think that I know that, because then it's kind of my proof that, yeah I've got that connection. I know you better than anybody in the world." There is perhaps a certain sense of accomplishment in acquiring the capacity to intuit the world of other in Being-Known. When his wife appeared to be playing coy regarding her thoughts about a vacation plan, Rod described the experience of intuiting her preferences as "almost like winning." This was portrayed as a playful exchange between self and other that culminated in her conveying satisfaction in Being-Known. "It's almost like, good you know. Because I didn't want to say it, but you know - so good."

Insight in Being-Known

Being-Known extends to insights obtained about self. Being-Known for Tim is " also an acknowledgement, a realization, that sometimes I can't see in myself what she sees in me." In the context of Being-Known you may be forced to confront yourself. Often immersed in the fullness of his life, Being-Known created the atmosphere for Tim's wife to draw him out. "I'm running around. I'm tired. People are saying I'm tired. She's talking to me about how I'm doing and I start telling her and she says, 'You know you're looking really rough. What's going on? Do you want to talk about it?' No I don't want to talk. Yeah maybe we should talk. And I'll start talking about it. And I'll get teared up. And I think that's what that is. It's like man I don't know how this happens. I just take stuff on." Peter described a similar experience. "She'll come right out and say, 'Something's bothering you.' And I'll say, 'No it isn't,' because I don't want to deal with it. And she'll say, 'okay, well I just thought I'd let you know.' Whereas I should be saying, yeah it is. I'm trying to work on that."

Rod observed that the ongoing exchange of understanding in Being-Known can reflect back on himself. "Or even sometimes, yourself it comes out. When you say, gee, maybe I've never really challenged myself on that before. Maybe I don't want kids. Or maybe I never thought about it. I just always assumed I did. So during those discussions, things about yourself will come out as well." Indeed, there are things that you learn from Being-Known that are self enhancing. For Rod the process of Being-Known "makes you a better person." Through her understanding of him Rod recognized that others could misperceive him. "Even simple things, where I wasn't even aware that in my personality, that I was rude to people in certain circumstances. Now that I know from what she's taught me - from being in that relationship with her - that I've known that maybe I was doing something wrong. So I've come a long way I think as far as just being aware of your own identity through how she responds. And it kind of makes it more evident to yourself."

The experience of insight in Being-Known is reciprocal. The influence of Being-Known extends to our partners too. Rod described an occasion when he helped his wife reconcile unclear feelings about a friendship. "I stepped into the picture and was kind of analyzing the whole relationship. I'm like, okay this is how you're approaching the situation, this is how you feel about her. She's like, wow you're totally right. Like you're spot on. This is exactly why I am that way around her. Wow, you just totally analyzed that and exactly how I feel."

Difference in Being-Known

Being-Known illuminates difference and establishes differentiation. Even though Being-Known can strengthen the emotional bond, there are aspects of self and other that are not understood. Tim described differences that sometimes created relational strife. "I'm more laissez faire. She's more straight ahead. Yet I'm more frank in terms of confronting issues. She's more under the table." Equally important in Being-Known is the capacity to differentiate self and other. Tim illuminated how this surfaced in relational strife. "I know that if I am dealing with it in an inappropriate way, that often has to do with my being hungry or tired or feeling ticked off in our relationship."

Being-Known sometimes illuminates irreconcilable differences that activate self-censorship. As a man who related "fairly warmly to lots of people" Karl observed that his wife did not find it easy to accept his "huggy" approach to these relationships "because she's not that way." Karl found it necessary to restrict his relational world in order to avoid "jeopardizing our relationship because she's threatened by this." In a similar vein Rod struggled with conflicting relational loyalties regarding his wife's intolerance of some of his extended family. "So I think a lot of times that might be one area where we know that we're never going to agree. That's never going to be fixed. That's never going to be solved." Similarly, Karl illuminated the challenge of difference in blended families. "Sometimes I don't think she understands my children very well, but maybe I don't understand her children either. I can't have the same kind of understanding and appreciation for her children as she does and the same is true with mine. It can create a little distance for the moment."

Relational Resilience in Being-Known

The relational dialogue of Being-Known may be crucial for sustaining relationships through uncertain times. For Adrian this dialogue held the marriage together through the difficult early years. "I don't think that we would have stayed together had we not talked a lot." Barriers to the emotional bond may be removed in the relational dialogue. By "checking about what she's actually feeling" when he experienced anxiety about her commitment or perceived anger, Brad obtained relief in the understanding obtained in the relational dialogue that serves Being-Known. "I'm finding out that what I'm feeling is not necessarily connected to what she's doing."

Nick attributed the collapse of a previous relationship to the inability to negotiate a relational dialogue. "I said well what about us. And in the attempts to talk about the challenges that I was feeling or experiencing in the relationship, it would have to be put on hold because they have to travel here, there, and everything. And then by the time they came back, then it was okay so, are we going to talk? Well I don't want to talk about that. So then it would tend to break up." As Nick illustrated, the outcome of Being-Known may simply be an understanding about important things that respective partners want in the relationship, such as placing the relationship ahead of career.

Sharing Growth in Being-Known

Being-Known can unfold in the sharing of personal growth. In dealing with his addiction Guy commented on the reticence among other addicts and their spouses to talk about their condition. However, for him the emotional bond was strengthened in the relational dialogue of Being-Known. "I want to talk with her about what I'm going through – that I'm experiencing this and this is really tough. So I got this person who wants to be involved in this growth and the challenge and the change and everything else." With a personal history of childhood and relational trauma, Brad described the evolution of the emotional bond through Being-Known in a therapeutic setting where he and his wife "shared almost like our inner child." He described this as "taking something that's quite internal to myself and then sharing it with her."

The Essence of Being-Known

In the accomplishment of an emotional bond men experience being known by and knowing another more thoroughly than anyone else. An opening of selves occurs that surpasses the superficiality of everyday relating and adds substance to the emotional bond. Being-Known unfolds most richly in the uninhibited sharing and exploring of the more vulnerable aspects of self. Our essential being is revealed in the retrieval and sharing of our deeper personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences. There is a sense of freedom to discuss virtually everything about yourself, and little that she does not know about you.

A pleasurable and joyful well-being emerges in the acceptance and validation obtained in the exercise of thoroughly Being-Known by another. Affirmation of self as good enough is acquired in the revealing, understanding, and acceptance of where you come from, who you have been in the past, and who you are now. The sense of self is enriched in the knowledge that she endeavours to know and understand you, and takes pleasure in the breadth of who you are.

The familiarity of Being-Known has an unspoken aspect where you don't always have to say who you are. Undeclared internal distress is recognized and understood by her expression of voiced concern or silent embrace. The depth of Being-Known extends to accurate insights she offers when your own self-reflection and insight is insufficient.

Being-Known is a reciprocal condition where understanding, appreciating, admiring, and accepting her also has a place. There is an enduring interest in and focus on your partner. You come to know what is "in her heart." You understand "what they've had to overcome to be who they are." The exchange of Being-Known allows you to be tactful around areas of sensitivity and avoid harming one-another. As Being-Known establishes there is an effortless reciprocal anticipation of thoughts, actions, and comments.

The Consensus Theme

Consensus in Common Ground

The emotional bond is constituted in the context of similarity. Commonality in family history and relational readiness set the stage for developing an emotional bond for Chris. "We came from similar backgrounds. Our parents were all in business. She has one sibling and I have one sibling. And very common values that we were brought up in. It got a lot of that stuff out of the way because we clicked that way. That allowed us to be closer emotionally." The "similar circumstances" of not being "on the market" and relating "for reasons of just getting to know each other" smoothed entry to this emotional bond. "It just grew gradually. You find out that you have so much in common." Knowledge of shared goals eased the way. "Before we'd ever been together I knew that she'd want to have children some day and what was important as far as family." Ultimately the founding of Contentment in Consensus was implicit in Chris' observation that finding commonality eased the way through "that uncomfortable awkward stage way quicker."

Consensus as Compatibility

Adrian described Consensus as a partnership of compatibility. "We have all the things we like doing. We have these goals that we like doing, including having kids. Our goals are the same." Indeed, Consensus is founded in the relational dialogue of Being-Known. "We talked about what we were going to do in the future. What will happen and what we wanted for the kids. I think we both agreed. That's probably what it came down to. We both thought the same way. We both felt the same way about most things. And even now with the kids gone the attitude is the same. This is what we're going to do at the time. We both have the same attitude about what we're going to do and what we want to do. And I think that comes from all the years of talking about what we like, about what we want." Speaking of the relational dialogue that did not always occur in his marriage, Peter described the increasing commonality in Consensus that coincided with the strengthening of the emotional bond. "We want to grow old together and we want to make plans. We're starting to see the closer we get or connect, that her plans become my plans and vice versa. I mean we're just naturally starting to kind of come together and start to head down the same road."

Consensus forms in agreement on what can be very difficult topics. Don described this in his marriage. "I think our politics are fairly complimentary. They overlap. I'm sure if she was a rabid right-winger we'd have some serious bust ups. But I think she's not. If anything she's probably more socialist than I am." The enthusiastic relational dialogue of Being-Known, experienced throughout Rod's relationship, also illuminated compatibility in Consensus. "We're definitely clicking on a lot of our ideas and a lot of our beliefs and stuff like that. It didn't get ugly at all, as far as I think you're stupid for believing that. It was just great. We both kind of fed off it and we still get that kind of thing. And I think we've always had that. We've always been able to maintain that, almost where you feel like you're feeding off each other, that kind of synergy." In what could have been a particularly delicate gender related matter, Chris shared that Consensus was established surrounding role expectations. "We're kind of on an equal footing. I didn't feel like I was under any pressure to be the major breadwinner. I didn't think I was under any pressure to be any more a rock in the relationship than she was."

The unspoken aspect of Being-Known may provide a backdrop for Consensus. The experience where you "both think of the same thing" described by Mike and others seems to reflect Consensus, without which Rod's ability to "predict what she's going to say or how she's going to act" would be more challenging. Mike outlined the playful compatibility of spontaneity in Consensus. "We really don't plan a whole lot of stuff. And when we both kind of, well let's do that, it's kind of like there's twinkles in our eyes. Gee that's a good idea. Let's go do it. We'll just look at each other and do you want to go dancing or something? And you know it's like, yeah, good idea. Or you'll say something like, let's go, let's not go where we always go. Let's go somewhere different. It's like, oh yeah! You know I was thinking about that at work today."

As the sole participant who differed culturally Nick illuminated the significance of shared culture in the Consensus theme, distinguishing his current relationship in these terms. "We get along well together. Yes there is the typical disagreements and stuff like that. But what I find is we are able to come back and be grounded with each other. This relationship - because it's an intracultural relationship - there wasn't the issues like that first significant relationship that I had, where it was two cultures. So there is that normalcy to this. The nuances of culture is not different or unique to one party or the other." Shared interest in personal growth provided the context for Consensus among some participants. At the founding of their relationship Tim and his wife shared the burden of addiction. "Both of us were in recovery and very very serious about recovery. I mean we were involved in the AA thing - we had sponsors and we were going to meetings and we were reading books."

Consensus in Family

For several participants the Consensus theme was illuminated in the context of parenting and family. Consensus in having a family proved to be part of the glue that held Adrian's relationship together through very difficult times early in his marriage. "We wanted to have kids and be together and raise children together. Otherwise it would just be, well we'll just do our own things and just kind of live together." The Consensus of shared interest in family and children had special significance for Brad. "It's fun to think of a baby. We get a lot of enjoyment out of the baby. I like watching her nurture the kids. That's one of the things that attracted me, was her ability to be nurturing and to love quite deeply that way." A significant dimension of Peter's relationship was the coming together in parenting. "We're very much focused on our kids. We've got one particular kid who's quite a bit more needy than the other ones - just challenged academically." As previously noted Tim's relationship also formed in part around family. "We do many many things with our kids – all together. We're always there together." In a different fashion Consensus was established under blended family conditions for Don. "She doesn't have high expectations of me getting strongly emotionally involved, which is another reason why the relationship works. We are an item and then she connects with children and that's fine."

Consensus in Everyday Affairs

Consensus applies to everyday routine. Adrian and his wife "worked out a system" in household duties and parenting that created a sense of synchrony. "It was just a really good understanding. It was really comfortable. This was the way we did things. Took the kids swimming, went out to lunch during the day on Saturdays. Had a routine." There was agreement in the everyday matters. "It's just that you know that everybody's going to do their role." The current routine continues to inform Consensus for Adrian. "Things fall into place. When she wakes me up, I just go do the dishwasher, because she's done the breakfast already. She gets everything ready. So it would be kind of dumb for me to just sit on the chesterfield while she cleans up the dishwasher from the night before. It's sort of like this will make things go quicker."

The harmony of Consensus was reflected in the degree to which relational conflict was mitigated for Mike. "We don't fight over anything except money. When its budget time that's the only real time that we have any real arguments or anything. And that's just about it for us. We are very compatible that way. And I think we've known that over the long time now, how easy going we both are, and very willing to compromise with each other . . . I can honestly say that we've never had anything that has put a wall between us, or anything, other than that budget, money thing."

Consensus in Commitment

For some participants Consensus was implicit in their understanding of mutual commitment to the relationship. This was especially significant for Nick. "The commitment on both of our parts is there. We both are committed to the relationship. We have grown I think, spiritually, emotionally, financially and cognitively together. We have similar likes and we have dislikes." Identifying as "life-long partners" Nick shared that "her and I have had this conversation that hey, we ain't going anywhere." Consensus in commitment seemed to have been a critical aspect of sustaining a relationship through adversity for Peter. "We've been through a lot. We've been, I guess trying never to give up. But knowing that there's got to be more to this relationship. There's got to be more to life than just being miserable. More than feeling happy. And always committing ourselves to each other."

Accommodating Difference in Consensus

Consensus accommodates individual differences. Alluding to differences in emotionality, Don shared that Consensus superceded "our different strengths and different weaknesses." He was candid about the preeminent position of Consensus. "This was not a partnership based entirely on an emotional attachment. It was something that could work for both of us." Accommodating differences in Consensus extended to interests where potential strain is neutralized. "We have interests that overlap and interests that are quite separate. I'm far more of the scientist and the technologist than she is. She's much more of the touchy, feely and caring person. So I think we recognize each other's strengths and we don't care about the weaknesses."

In a relationship marked by strong Consensus, Rod noted that differences did exist and required accommodation. "There's kind of a bit of an age difference. It's not huge, but it's enough for her to have a different opinion of things. It really forces me to kind of think differently. How would I approach this situation when we're looking at the major scope of our lives together? Maybe she's looking at it entirely different, because she's got more time to think about it?" Accommodation of difference was reflected in dialogue about when to have children for Rod. "We've been really battling back and forth with that one. Which is good, because then you get enough of both sides. Because we're going to have to handle both sides of the story."

In a relationship founded on the common interests of Consensus Adrian described how there is room for difference. "We met doing visual arts in university. We both like visual arts type stuff. We both like the arts. I really like classical music. Now she's into classical music, both wanting and liking the same thing. And that's probably where that security or comfort is I think. That I say, I think that we should go hiking in Jasper. She won't say well that's stupid I don't want to go. It would be I don't want to go, but you go ahead and take some time for yourself. So that works pretty well. There's never a worry about I want to do something, and oh I gee I'm not even going to bring it up because she's going to get pissed off. That kind of stuff never happens."

Brad illuminated the need to accommodate individual differences that extended to practical affairs. "I like to spend time as a family. I like people and being with people and would prefer to go into town with the whole family and not stay home alone, whereas she is very much independent. She gets a lot out of being alone. So she likes to be alone." Accommodation may be required when circumstances change. "With a larger family, where there used to be always we would do virtually everything together all the time and do it as a family . . . but with a larger family you have a tendency, I take two kids and she goes with two. We split it up that way."

At times Consensus calls for accommodation of differences that could engender conflict. Adrian illuminated accommodation in Consensus when there are differences of opinion and confrontation is counterproductive. "I know I'm right. I know she's wrong and I just let her think so. And I think that has to happen. She knows she does the same thing I'm sure. She just let's me think that I'm right. And she'll just walk away kind of smiling to herself. I don't lose anything by knowing she does that. She doesn't lose anything by knowing that I do that."

The Essence of Consensus

The emotional bond forms in the harmony of common ground, reflected in the simple "partnership" of self and other. Here a resonance of self and other unfolds in the comfortable, energizing, and joyful experience of similarity. With "so much in common" the emotional bond solidifies in a relational frame of mind that embraces the experience of shared-being.

Consensus is experienced as a simple and satisfying presence of harmony as "things fall into place." It is the sense of well-being and the joyful enthusiasm drawn from simply being "good together" across domains of interest and responsibilities. It also emerges as an affectively unremarkable and practical affair that is expressed in the smooth flow of shared activity and responsibility in relating and everyday affairs.

The common ground of shared-being is fertilized by reciprocal influence. Differences do exist, but become part of the complex texture of shared-being. Similarity and difference form a recursive dynamic that "feed off of each other" in a manner that accomplishes a sense of Consensus. Consensus entails discovery of ground for shared experience that accrues from her influence, as well as the pleasure and excitement of her joining in your ways of being.

Consensus grows from extended spoken exchanges surrounding important shared plans or experiences. Indeed, a good deal of Consensus unfolds in planning dialogue about a shared path of being together. Dialogue about "the plan" solidifies the emotional bond in the arousal of excitement and pleasure regarding the anticipated shared experience of a continuing future together.

In the theme of Consensus a prevailing synchronicity is established variously in the good fit of shared background, culture, circumstances, temperament, goals, interests, activities, perceptions, values, attitudes, and basis of attraction. Sameness in thought, feeling, interests and plans is established. Consensus also encompasses both positive and negative experience. Joy and sadness, good and bad are shared.

The Companionship Theme

Karl most poignantly illustrated the significance of being-together in the Companionship theme. "I was coming across on the ferry. I always like to go outside and lean over the rail and watch the islands go by. And there was a fabulous, beautiful sunset. And at that moment I still remember feeling sad that I didn't have someone to share this with. Because you know how it is if you've been some place and you've done something together and when you get back you say, oh remember that night on the ferry? Remember that sunset? Oh, that was so beautiful. When you're seeing it alone and you can't share that - there was a sadness there. And that's probably as close as I could come to defining what that part of security in a relationship. You've got someone to share experiences with."

Indeed, Companionship did unfold in the experience of shared-being for Karl. "Like her and I going to Europe and coming back and looking through the pictures and talking about this place and that place and people that we met. If I'd gone by myself it could have been a wonderful trip, but all I would have as far as other people are concerned would have been the pictures. I wouldn't have had that other person there to share that experience. There's a closeness in that because another person is participating in your experience and you're participating in their experience."

Karl clarified the shared positive and negative aspect of Companionship. "I suppose it's a vicarious happiness. You're happy because someone else is happy. You rejoice in their happy moments. You rejoice in their good fortune. You rejoice when things are good for them. And vice versa, when things are bad for them, it makes you feel bad too."

As Adrian observed Companionship is a certainty that you have someone to be with. "Putting it very simply, you didn't have to worry about getting a date for New Years Eve, that kind of thing. In Don's words, "it feels better than being alone or being single." Karl referred to Companionship as "a relationship security . . . somebody to go out together with." Adrian clarified that Companionship is relief from finding someone to be with. "The games. That is all over now. You don't have to do that anymore. You have an understanding that this is the person that you are going to go with and be with."

Notwithstanding this relatively stark characterization, Companionship is a significant condition that shared boundaries with Consensus and Contentment. For Adrian the notion of shared-being in Companionship hinged on the recognition that there are "all these things we like doing." Moreover, it provides reassurance in the form of an "understanding . . . it's good to know that you have one good friend." Karl underscored the agreeable and non-dependent state suggestive of Contentment reflected in Companionship. "There is a kind of security in it. But I certainly wouldn't have identified that as something that I needed when we first met." He clarified that the theme of Companionship does not reflect a desperate "security" to counter loneliness. "I never would have gotten married because I felt like I needed somebody. I enjoyed being single, but I enjoyed relationships too. I enjoy having people to go out with."

Not to dismiss the significance of Companionship Don distinguished the positive condition of joining in this theme, as pleasure in each other's company. "We like being with each other." Again he underplayed the emotional bond, this time in favour of Companionship. "I don't have a sense of a strong emotional connection. It's not really deep and romanticized. It's more like a partnership and friendship. We have chosen to be partners and sexual friends." Don summarized the companionate nature of Companionship. "I think we enjoy being together and we enjoy doing the things we do together." In a relationship marked by much involvement in respective "other interests" Don situated Companionship in the special time of shared activity in vacations, music, drama, and current events. "It's more that we just both go together because of what we both get out of it - being together."

In Companionship there may be reassurance that you are not left alone to face the burdens of being. Mike was notable in illuminating the significance of having someone to share the challenges of the lived world, especially regarding the demands of childbirth, threats to family well-being, trauma, and loss. "The knowing that the pain that you have is being shared by someone, could make it feel more bearable. It's easier to bear your strife, your pain, and your misery when you're sharing it with someone. Yeah, I guess that's, when I think of troubles and having someone to share them with. You don't take the whole brunt of it yourself. It makes it feel good to have someone to share your misery with." Mike revealed what could be considered a deeper understanding of his relationality by illuminating existential aspects of the Companionship theme. "One of the bigger things is that at this point in our lives, the sharing part of things. I've got to admit that 20 years ago I was still a little more self-centred. It was me, me, me. But as time goes I guess you realize that you are not the centre of the universe. You are destructible. That makes you vulnerable. To have someone to share your experiences with takes some of that vulnerability away."

Finally, speaking of a sense of security Karl illuminated the significance of Companionship in the emotional bond. "In a relationship I think where there is the closeness, where you really feel close with another person, it makes you feel a little bit more secure. Just secure in knowing that you've got someone to be with, that you're comfortable with that person, that there's a lot of positive feeling toward that person, there's a lot of positive feelings coming from that person. Knowing that there are lots of things that you can do together."

The Essence of Companionship

The experience of emotional bond involves a comfortable well-being found in the company of another who enriches existence by sharing the lived-world with you. It is the reassurance of knowing "that you have one good friend" – that there is one other special person in the world who will join you in the experience of life. As a companionate alliance the emotional bond provides relief from isolation. Simply put, "it feels better than being alone." In the absence of Companionship the richness of experience is diminished, life feels empty and sad; however, it is not so much a need as something that completes the emotional bond.

The theme of Companionship spans the realm of ordinary affairs, special joyful events, and strife. It is having someone to share treasured moments and accomplishments, as well as the enduring the trials of living. The theme of Companionship is illuminated in the simple joy of togetherness displayed variously in touch, dialogue, exchange of gaze, and activity. It is the pleasure of being engaged in the exercise of sharing experience and interests, a pleasure that you can sustain by reminiscing about special moments. In Companionship the fortified emotional bond provides a sense of security that you are not alone in negotiating the strife of being-in-the-world.

The Sense of Security Theme

Best Interests in the Sense of Security

The Sense of Security unfolds in the context of having someone special to turn to when being-in-the-world is challenged. It is constituted in the experience of her presence and support especially for you. Peter reflected on the experience of "a sense of security" and its importance. "That's probably the biggest thing, knowing that they're there no matter what. That they're looking out for my best interest." Moreover, the Sense of Security persisted in the wavering emotional bond. "Despite how I might feel she really truly has the best interests in mind." The focal interest on one's self was illuminated by Don. "She cares about me and I recognize that she has my interests at heart." Ultimately the Sense of Security informs your own personal significance. As Chris observed, "I feel like I matter!" Indeed, it heightens the significance of the life you have. "I just feel better because it puts things in perspective. Again, I got lots to be thankful for."

The personal significance of the Sense of Security was also revealed by Rod. "It makes you aware of your own vulnerabilities. It makes you aware, gee, I am pretty dependent on this person. It's kind of reaffirming that they are there for you, because you're definitely thankful for it. You're thinking wow, if I was on my own, if I didn't have this, you don't even want to think of how you would have to cope with things." He clarified that the Sense of Security can become subtle, creating a risk that it may pass unacknowledged. "Because you're lucky that you don't have to think about it. If you really think about it, you know how it makes you feel. You should think that every time actually. So you don't take it for granted, because it can become customary."

The Sense of Support was distinguished by Adrian as the liberty to directly or indirectly seek support at times of need. "There was a trust that's been established. If I ask for advice she'll give it. Sometimes she'll give it without me asking because it's implied in a conversation." In a relationship where both partners were portrayed as capably independent the Sense of Security was characterized by Don as "an awareness that she's there for me and I can ask her for help if I need it." Hence, the Sense of Security may lie dormant, rarely or perhaps never accessed, but leaving a sense of presence. "It's just the comfort of knowing that if I need her, she's there."

Emotional Support in the Sense of Security

The Sense of Security is partially constituted in the emotional support obtained from being heard and validated. Adrian illustrated the condition of supportive listening that creates the Sense of Security. "So if I ever get depressed about anything, I can just go sit with her and feel better. Like if I get depressed about work, or worried about some person that's coming down my throat and I've got to go and talk to the boss. I can talk to her about it and she'll listen. She's very good at that."

Chris described a "sense of security" that helped form Contentment. "I remember being under lots of stress and freaking out when I was in university. I didn't think I was going to perform well. She's a good listener. She was there for me to vent and bitch and piss and moan. She was a good reframer at the end of it. She goes, 'Okay, but look at everything you've done, like you're doing awesome, so it's going to be okay.' You know sometimes it felt good and comforting, and just kind of gives you a sense of security. And again that little bump of confidence, that it is okay."

John illuminated the breadth of the Sense of Security. "I feel like she's there to support me and help me reach the goals that I want to with my career and things like that. And also to I guess support me when I'm down too. I'm happy to have that in my life." The significance of emotional support surfaced regarding a family death. "Knowing that, feeling that she was there for me helped me. I could trust that she would be there to worry about the little things. That's one thing, the day-to-day things while I tried to grieve this. It made me feel somewhat at peace that she was there and I could unload some of my thoughts and emotions on her."

Placing the Sense of Security

Sometimes the Sense of Security forms in the context of work and career. Rod spoke of "damaging days" in that realm. "It's a great feeling to know that I'm not on my own dealing with that. Like you can get some sense of relief from friends. But it's different when you can draw on that other person for sure." Here Being-Known compliments the Sense of Security. "If I've had a horrific day, immediately she knows that, like there's no way that you hide those things from your partner. They know when you're not a 100% or not doing well. So you don't even have to say anything. And you just know that it's there for you. Whatever it needs to be, in whatever form, it's there for you." Rod elaborated on the Sense of Security related to work stress. "Just mentally fatigued. And of course that affects you emotionally as well, because sometimes you don't have as good a grip on your emotions as you normally would if you're sharp. So in a case like that it could be anything from her. It could be just talking about it, you know, just an outlet. It could be something physical, like holding each other. Which can definitely kind of recharge the batteries. Even without saying anything, just the physical bond."

Chris poignantly described the experience of Contentment within the Sense of Security on his return home from a particularly distressing day at work. "Sometimes it's not words. Sometimes if I come home - something at work that's really quite awful - and I come home. Sometimes I just grab her and hug her. And she knows that something went down. And if I want to talk about it I'll talk about it. If I don't that's cool. She doesn't push. I think I feel pretty tight with her then. Yeah, I've never thought about that before, but it's true. She's pretty good at picking up the non-verbals. If I have a particularly bad day with something like that, usually I go straight for my kids and I hang on a little longer than probably I would on a normal day. And then she knows and then she just comes. So that's good."

The Sense of Security unfolded in encouraging words for Guy following a work injury. "I came home and I walked in the door and I looked at my wife and I just started to cry. Emotionally, physically stripped and she just held me." Facing another financial failure, Guy experienced the reassuring support of the Sense of Security. "I remember just sitting there crying. She held me and said, 'Don't worry about this, we'll get through this. It's okay.' And that was an emotional connection." Similarly, when Tim knew that the effects of his own personal struggles would seriously impact the relationship financially and emotionally, his partner stood by him. "I remember going to her and saying, I bring a lot of baggage to this relationship. I would totally understand if you walked away." Unaccustomed to the Sense of Support, Tim was struck by her response and broke into tears. "I can remember that moment very clearly, that she said she would stick by me, that she loved me, she had a lot of faith in me."

The Sense of Security confronts self-doubt and personal insecurity. Emotional support came again to Tim when considering a career change. "I was reluctant to tell her that I was thinking about going back to school. She knew. She said to me one night, 'You've been thinking about going back.' I said, 'Well yeah, but I don't really think I can do it.' She said, 'You know Tim as long as you follow your heart you're going to be okay and I think we're going to be okay.'" Validation of self is central to the Sense of Security. "I've struggled with feeling worthy and I think somehow I thought that she agreed that I was worthy of this endeavor. That I could actually do it."

The Sense of Security emerged in the experience of loss for Guy. "When my father passed away she was there. Her pain was great too, but she was able to share my pain and help me through that process." Support in the practical affairs relating to the chaos of loss and funeral arrangements informed the Sense of Security theme. "All of this is going on and she just stepped right up." Ultimately, the Sense of Security unfolds in the presence of a trustworthy and emotionally supportive other. "Just having somebody there to just hold you through that – to be so vulnerable and so absolutely ripped bare and have a person there who was so trusted - to know that this person was not going to hurt you. There's no worries. There's no need to be protected."

In a similar vein Mike expressed confidence in the emotional support of his wife regarding the inevitable loss of his parents. "I'm sure that I'm going to try be the stiff upper lip kind of guy and I'm going to try to suppress my emotions probably the best that I can do. I'm sure there's going to be a point where I'll be - I will break down. And I know that she'll be right there. I'm very confident about that. But, to know that she'll be there for the moral support, the physical support. That's a good feeling. It's like you can count on somebody."

A sense of reassurance and optimism accrues in the Sense of Security. Adrian illustrated this surrounding financial matters and the break down of their automobile. "I'm sitting here saying, oh gees what are we going to do now? She says, don't worry about that, if something goes wrong we can borrow from my parents, we can rent a car for a while, tow it down, and all this sort of thing. So she'd always come up with, don't worry about it, we'll do this. She's still doing that, like, don't worry about spending all that money, we'll pay it off somehow. So in the end it always works out."

Finally, the support that builds the Sense of Security may unfold in the context of confrontation. Tim recounted how his wife inadvertently provoked action on his career dissatisfaction. "I started missing some time because I didn't want to go to work. And she pointed that out, 'What to hell are you doing?' It brought back an old argument that I used to not like. What are you going to do with your life? You still don't know! She was hitting below the belt. But she was saying look, if you don't like it, look around for something else. You know you're moping around here, you're bitching about work all the time. I'm sick of listening." Hence, there is an implicit influence in the Sense of Support. As Adrian shared, "She's taught me to shut up and listen too." Indeed, it seems that sometimes, "you need somebody to say that was really stupid."

Reciprocal Support

In the Sense of Security theme the focal interest also turns to other. The condition of reciprocal support is implicit in Karl's comments. "I am probably inclined to want to be really attached to someone that I feel that needs me - that I can help that person." The relationship in which there was a strong emotional bond was with "someone whom I really felt needed me." In his present marriage Karl shared that "she really needs me and so that's part of the attachment. I know that." Inability to exercise caring weakened the emotional bond in some of Karl's previous relationships, especially his first marriage. "It could have been a really wonderful marriage too. But that person didn't need me and I was quite aware of that." Karl emphasized the bonding aspect of caring over that of dependence. "It made me feel closer. You don't want a person to feel like they need your help. But it's a good feeling to want to help and to want to be there in a very positive and supportive way for someone."

Emphasizing the reciprocal condition of the Sense of Security, Rod spoke of the comfort that unfolds from the "safety net" of mutual support. "So if you're both able to do that, support each other, no matter what the incidents or the occurrence, as long as you're there emotionally." However, creating the Sense of Security may not come without sacrifice. "Sometimes you have to do that. Sometimes I've just let her drain me entirely emotionally because she needs to do that. It's just a little sacrifice that you do. It's kind of - part of your job in a relationship. And it's the same way. If I need that, I can go to her at anytime and it's there. For sure it's a comfort and safety."

Reciprocity in the Sense of Security was illuminated in the context of feeling supported, as if the latter was a precondition to reciprocal support. Indeed, without the Sense of Security, supporting other may be challenging for some men. Peter spoke of the difficulty overriding self-serving impulses to fulfill her needs. "It's really difficult sometimes because society tells you that you need to look after your own needs first and not someone else's. So it's kind of a bit backwards in realizing that if I fulfill her needs that there's a chance that she's going to do that too." The precondition of a Sense of Security is implicit in Peter's comments. "I hate to use the word security again, but I am usually not open and honest with just anybody. I'm not open and honest with her all the time. But at that moment when you feel - I guess feel safe - it's almost like you give a little and then she gives a little, and it just seems to be a natural flow."

Mike illustrated reciprocity well. "To know that she'll be there for the moral support, the physical support. It would be like if we were in a relay race. I'd know that she would be there to take the baton from me or to hand it to me, whichever way it would go she would be there. I'm very confident in the way she would be there for me and then I would be there for her too." Similarly Tim illuminated reciprocal support as part of the Sense of Security. "Sometimes if somebody notices something in me or gives me a pat on the back and says you know, you can do it and we have faith in you I'll go with that. She does that all the time and I think I do that with her as well, I mean she confides in me a lot about her fears at work. She's got a new job and didn't think she was capable. She's very capable and just didn't think that she had a chance."

As Don described, reciprocal support may involve the paradoxical conditions of being there and staying out of the way. "She would say that I'm easy to deal with. I mean that's partly because I don't make big emotional demands on her I think. Now she knows that I'm there for her and when she needs my help she can ask for it and generally speaking I try to give it."

Although somewhat challenged in his ability to turn the focal interest on his wife, Guy did display insight into reciprocal support in the Sense of Security. "That feels more at ease. So if I were to explain to somebody what makes the difference, the difference to me is giving of myself – just giving without – not wanting anything in return, there's no motives. There's just, hey she had a bad day, maybe I can make it a little bit better if I do a couple of things for that person."

Challenges in the Sense of Security

The Sense of Security is not necessarily easily established. Sometimes it does not unfold well or reliably. Indeed, the significance of the Sense of Security was sometimes illuminated by its absence. In this way Chris clarified that the Sense of Security comes from the opportunity to express feelings, as well as being heard and validated. "She's a fixer sometimes. She wants to solve your problem. Sometimes I just need to bitch for five minutes. Let me say it. She'll come up with some suggestion and I get pissed off. I'll say, what are you talking about. You don't even know what you're talking about. Just forget it. You don't understand." Chris clarified that "there's other times when she's not in a fix it mood and I feel heard and I feel supported and I feel that closeness."

John's experience of his wife's impatience with his grieving illuminated the importance of a strong and dedicated focus on the supported self in the Sense of Security. "A year and a half later when I was still trying to deal with this she got very frustrated that I hadn't moved on with this yet, hadn't moved on to the next stage of this." Indeed, failures of the Sense of Security can create breaches in the emotional bond. "At the time I felt very frustrated that she still wasn't allowing me to grieve. I was thinking at the time, I thought it was selfish of her." Failures in emotional support may turn partners against one another. "I don't think it necessarily made me sad, it made me angry. At the time it made me want to get revenge. I would think, if this ever comes up for you where you have such a battle in your life to deal with maybe at that time I'm going to do this to you. I think when push came to shove I wouldn't do that, but that's what I felt."

Difficulty in establishing the Sense of Security extended to the ability to reciprocate with support. In John's case this surfaced as what seemed to be a deficit in supportive competence. "If something is upsetting her, she'll describe to me why it's bothering her or what the problem is. I'll throw out the easy solution without diving in too deep. She's been upset about work, for actually about a year. So she'll come home and describe that she's having a problem with her colleagues and that's upset her very much. And just the other day I gave her the solution, ignore them. I know her and I know that's not the right answer. That's not what she would need to do. So she'll get very frustrated with me at that time for doing that. And I think I do that because at that time I was distracted by something else, a television set. I think if I felt more connected to her problem - probably what I'm not doing at that time is reading the emotion that she's got tied up in this.

Realizing that this is bigger than a small issue. I do have trouble reading when the time is right, put the extra effort."

Mike also expressed doubt about his ability to provide reciprocal support. "I don't know if I could give as much emotion as what she could. I don't know if it's in my mind that women are better at giving emotional support than men. I'm sure that there would be more coming from her than being reciprocated. I would definitely be there to give, but it wouldn't be as much as she would. I don't know if it would be that what I wouldn't. It's more she would be capable of more emotional strength. I'm starting to think that maybe I'm a little more cold hearted than she is. She's a lot more loving person than I am, because I definitely feel that her giving, she would give a whole lot more than I could. I guarantee that she's capable of giving a lot more than a man, than I could."

The Essence of a Sense of Security

In the emotional bond "a sense of security" emerges in the presence of a responsive partner who knows, supports, and has your best interests at heart. It is "like a safety net" of having someone there for you emotionally. The security of well-being is obtained in the shadow of a mindful other who is "there no matter what." It evolves to an effortless exchange of reciprocal support that enhances the texture of emotional bond and strengthens its hold.

Although it applies to pursuit of practical affairs, personal aspirations, and general well-being, the Sense of Security emerges most prominently "in times of difficulty." In the immediacy of life challenges "knowing that the pain that you have is being shared by someone" makes "it feel more bearable." The presence of a supportive partner who helps soothe distress and generates an atmosphere of reassurance, promotes a sense of relief and closure at times of duress. It allows you to relax, and frees you to easily turn to other matters.

With the Sense of Security in place opening up and sharing emotionally is easier. There is a sense of freedom to protest and call attention to distress at times of need: to verbally discharge emotional distress. Still, the Sense of Security can unfold without speaking. A hug or a look can express the presence of distress, and the need for reassuring support. The felt Sense of Security is obtained in the sense of validation from being heard, understood, and considered important to someone. It can be a simple quiet acceptance and understanding, or the gesture of her simply standing by.

The Sense of Security is a reciprocal condition that involves having "someone to really care about." A sense of pleasure and satisfaction is obtained from the experience of throwing yourself into caring compassionately for a special other. Recognizing her distress, and being able to "help" by having a good "grasp on her "emotions" makes you significant in her life, and seems to bring you closer.

The Emotional Opening Theme

When forming the emotional bond one may encounter the challenge of opening to the emotional experience itself. There is vulnerability in opening oneself to the emotional bond. Peter illuminated this in his reflection on exclusive moments. "At a time that we can really truly be alone and connect. We're opening ourselves up to each other and we're saying, listen I'm vulnerable and please be vulnerable too, because then we can really, really connect. But there's a certain amount of risk that you have to give-in to, to be able to say, you know what I'm going to open myself up, but please don't hurt me." Although vulnerability poses a risk in Emotional Opening, "by opening up the gains are incredible." Once again Peter resorted to descriptive imagery to outline the experience of Emotional Opening that would appear once again to lead to Contentment. "I can see me opening the door and I didn't picture the door closed, the door stayed open. Once my focus was on her, once I got into this small area, the door wasn't an issue anymore, it was like the door was forgotten. Her door was forgotten and I never looked back. So we're in this kind of area that's very warm and peaceful and relaxing and trusting."

Brad also spoke of the role of vulnerability in opening emotionally to the embrace of the emotional bond, as well as the significance of Emotional Opening in the experience of the emotional bond. "That gets into the vulnerability. Allowing myself to feel. Allowing that feeling to be. Allowing that feeling to come in. Opening myself up, that sort of thing. Like I can be quite removed or quite closed. There's no closeness with that." Brad's comments about his relationships with children provide a distinct texture to the vulnerability of Emotional Opening. "It's much easier to deal with kids because they're more innocent and more open. There's not the two-way street. Kids generally won't hurt you. Most kids are generally fairly innocent and so the barriers aren't there."

Brad described the significance, process, and vulnerability of Emotional Opening during a special moment that helped form the emotional bond, in part through Being-Known. "So it was very close and quite a special moment. I can't specifically say what we talked about . . . sort of taking something that's quite internal to myself, and then sharing it with her. It's a very special spot. There's a vulnerableness to it too, quite a sensitivity and, well there's innocence with it too. There's a lot fun and joking and sort of that fun childish side too, which is quite neat to share." In the depth and presence of this moment Brad noted the importance of reciprocal Emotional Opening. "The connectedness comes from allowing myself to share that with her. And there's got to be a trust on my part that she's sharing back. Because I'm not going to do that just with anybody and just be open." He alluded as well to the progression that tests the limits of vulnerability in Emotional Opening. "It was sort of a building. I think there's a testing that you do to see whether or not that person returns or is of the same mind, or the same feeling. So there's a sort of a checking out.

Vulnerability and the challenge of Emotional Opening are implicit in Tim's hesitancy regarding investing in another emotional bond. "I was very leery about getting, forming an emotional attachment and letting myself be open to all that that might mean. Because I was in a previous relationship, very short lived marriage . . . I was quite damaged by that experience and was reluctant to get into a relationship in which I would, or could be, trusting of the other individual, trusting enough to let her in and know all of me." Perhaps as a testament to successfully negotiating the challenge of authentic Emotional Opening, Tim spoke of his present relationship as "the first time in my life that I had an honest relationship with a woman that didn't involve alcohol and drugs."

In part alluding to socialization of male stereotypes and in part drawing on his childhood history, Guy illuminated the challenge and vulnerability of Emotional-Opening. "I go to that person with all that baggage and everything that I've learned in my life about taking care of myself and not relying on other people. And I leave it all there and trust you. You are not going to hurt me. It's the quintessential sense of just allowing that absolute inner child of yourself to just be held by another person and just be nurtured and trust and know that they are not going to hurt you." Finally, Guy illuminated what may be a link between Emotional Opening and the experience of a

Sense of Security for some men. "It's the quintessential sense of just allowing that absolute inner child baby of yourself to just be held by another person and just be nurtured. And trust and know that they are not going to hurt you: that the only thing that they have in mind is your best spiritual growth. And that they are there for you and they are going to help you get there and they are supportive and that nothing you could do is going to make them want to leave you or hurt you or any of that stuff."

The Essence of Emotional Opening

In establishing and maintaining an emotional bond men confront the basic condition of opening themselves to the tender and vulnerable world of emotional closeness. As one participant observed, this entails "allowing that feeling to come in." To enter into an emotional bond it seems necessary to negotiate the risk of vulnerability. Men appear to anticipate a nebulous and unsettling experience of emotional activation as they approach the more intimate revealing of self.

Emotional Opening entails moving beyond trepidation about emotional harm, and to trust that she will be there when you step into the space of the emotional bond. It means taking the risk that your partner may not reciprocate in shared openness. Nonetheless, men appear able to negotiate the barrier of vulnerability. Emotional Opening then emerges as a satisfying depth of authentic exchange that surpasses the "surfacy" condition of unfulfilling relationships. No longer guarded it is easier for men to express tender emotions. Crying is acceptable, although in the hold of emotional bond it may seem unnecessary.

In the ambiance of Emotional Opening experience is enriched, adding emotional texture and heightening everyday experience, without which life seems more vacant.

You are more receptive to the immediate world, the sphere of personal emotions, and the comfort of bonding. You become more aware of the illuminating significance of her presence and emotional state, which extends to recognition of her awareness of you. In accomplishing Emotional Opening a certain reflective and emotionally expressive stance emerges that does not occur in any other relational context. It almost compels you to deal with issues that could otherwise have been dismissed. Hence, barriers to emotional bonding in everyday affairs are more easily removed.

Surviving The Journey

In the course of describing their experience of the emotional bond participants illuminated a variety of conditions that at one time or another made it difficult to establish and maintain the emotional bond. The higher order theme of Surviving the Journey illuminates the challenges experienced by some men in establishing and maintaining an emotional bond, and is composed of four themes: Struggle to Bond, Maturity, Subverting Self, and Emotional Closing. They reflect men's experience of barriers to the emotional bond variously formed in relational strife, the demands of everyday affairs, or just neglect. Moreover, ones self can get in the way of the emotional bond to the extent that it supersedes relationality and fails to make a space for the significant other. It seems that men obtain an experience of transformation that comes with relational experience and maturity, without which the emotional bond may be experienced as elusive and unstable. If nothing else men come to experience the emotional bond as important to pursue, and do so by removing the barrier of self and opening emotionally to their spouses.

Nonetheless, of the three higher order themes intuited in this analysis (Settling In, Joining, and Surviving the Journey), it is considered that there is less strength to the condition of Surviving the Journey. There was substantially less unanimity regarding the themes that composed Surviving the Journey, and for most participants it was largely a thing of the past. Indeed, this aspect of the thematic structure received the least endorsement of goodness of fit. Many of the barriers to the emotional bond contained herein were rather modest and did not appear to be an immediate threat to the emotional bond in the majority of cases. Hence, the emotional bond could be buffeted around, but in most cases was not seriously challenged. Indeed, it appeared that in current relationships the emotional bond could coexist with the challenges posed in Surviving the Journey. Some aspects of this challenge were certainly considered significant for participants; however, others seemed more to be challenges of ordinary living.

The Struggle to Bond Theme

Enduring the Past in the Struggle to Bond

For some participants establishing and maintaining an emotional bond required the negotiation of very difficult terrain. Adrian survived a Struggle to Bond that made the first years of his marriage toxic. “At first it was a battle. The first 3 years I didn’t really like her. She didn’t like me.” The Struggle to bond could seem quite dark. “My experience was, I don’t want to be here. Sometimes when it was really bad, I’d say, I just wish to hell she’d just get in a car accident. It would solve my problems. I wouldn’t have to worry about it anymore. It was pretty extreme.” There was no homecoming appeal for Adrian. “It was more pleasant being apart. Coming home was, well Christ, now what? See what the issue’s going to be here now? What kind of bullshit am I going to have to put up with? That's what that was like. It was opposite." Notwithstanding his successful negotiation of the Struggle to Bond Adrian underscored the significance of this strife. "I would never go through all that garbage I went through ever again. If I had to do it again I wouldn't."

Karl described "the fear of loss" experienced in his first marriage. "That fear of losing someone. I remember she would go out in the evening with a friend. When they didn't come back I would be really quite concerned. And I had visions that something had happened to her. Having resolved this issue, in his present marriage such feelings are absent. "I just recognized that I miss her." Brad also spoke of working through "a lot of fears and anxiety" early in this his second marriage. Indeed, he illuminated the emotional bond in terms of surviving the Struggle to Bond. Alluding to the point where the Contentment was obtained he shared that "there's less barriers there, less worry, less fear, less anxiety about what might happen."

The Struggle to Bond may be founded in previous relational history. As previously noted, Tim shared that "there was some fear and apprehension about being involved in another relationship." He spoke of having been "quite damaged" by his first marriage and of feeling "very leery" upon entering his present relationship. The challenge emerged as difficulty "trusting enough to let her in and know all of me." John's family relational history impinged on in the Struggle to Bond when memories of childhood surfaced during current relational conflicts. "I go back a lot to my, my parents would fight - very rarely - but when they did it dragged out. I think the upsetting part to me was it brings back those memories of smashing plates and things like that."

For Brad the Struggle to Bond accrued from the combined spillover of childhood and adult relational trauma. He described how childhood sexual abuse "kind of intermingles" in the Struggle to Bond. "Because for a while I was experiencing flashbacks and stuff that would affect our closeness. It would be quite fearful and feel like she was possibly abusing me." Brad also described difficulty differentiating the negative affectivity of his first marriage from ordinary exchanges in his second. "I remember struggling through it a bit because there was like carry over. I remember when she was doing some cleaning, and specifically around vacuuming. I just had this message in my head that she was angry at me. That was because my ex-wife was always angry at me and that's what she would do when she was angry."

Peter provided descriptions of the Struggle to Bond that spanned the length of his marriage and only recently seemed to be subsiding. He described conflict gridlock of stubborn disagreement where "we've really set up walls and roadblocks and we've said, 'you know what unless you're budging I'm not budging' and so it's been kind of lots of friction."

Barriers in The Struggle to Bond

The Struggle to Bond can unfold in misperception and misunderstanding. Tim recounted that the emotional bond dissipated in what seemed to him to be emotional distancing. "She would stare off. I remember thinking then that she wasn't letting me into her world and I wanted to know what was in her world." Tim struggled with the perception that "she's just tuning me out and I couldn't connect." In the throes of this strife he spoke of experiencing "panic . . . she doesn't hear me, she's staring off."

Confronting her on this provoked her anger and the panic evolved to "despair, lack of hope, the antithesis – right so we're going the other way."

As Brad revealed the Struggle to Bond may involve waning emotional intensity and idealization of early relationality. "Over time that disappeared because you get into the regular pattern of life. I'm doing my thing and she's doing hers. You start to sort out that maybe she's not as perfect as I thought. She's not doing everything exactly as I thought she was. So then I was really feeling like that emotional connectedness wasn't there." Indeed, the allure of the euphoria of intense romantic involvement seemed to present a barrier to a sustainable emotional bond for Brad. "I wanted that closeness that I had with my former wife. I sort of felt like that should be there. I wasn't sure what was going on. I really wanted to be that close."

A barrier in the Struggle to Bond emerged for John in the context of relational conflict. "Fighting upsets me very much. It's not just the fight that upsets me. It's the fact we're fighting upsets me. I have a hard time accepting that. Whereas she doesn't." A sense of helplessness and deficits in relational competence can complicate this condition. John spoke of being "very frustrated that I can't do something about any of this." He described a tendency to "fix it superficially just to get it over with" when faced with relational conflict. "I tend to leave it to her to do the reconciling because I try superficially to do it and it doesn't' work. I never end up taking it to the next step. I wait for her to stop being angry." The Struggle to Bond for John also surfaced in the challenge of relinquishing conflict. "I'm never that happy when it's over. I'm happy it's ended, but I still carry on with a bit of the anger that it came up in the first place."

When aware of emotional distance in his relationship John described being drawn further into the Struggle to Bond. "I tend to dwell on the catastrophic. This is the end. This is the end type of thing. I feel panicky about a future, upset about our future - that it possibly might not happen. Actually it's not even possible at those times when I'm feeling like that. I'm sure that this is it." The "painful" experience of the Struggle to Bond for John invoked attempts to escape the discomfort. "I kind of bury myself in my work, because I can avoid it." However, such efforts seem futile. "I have a hard time focusing when I'm waiting" for her anger to abate. "Can't focus. I have a hard time focusing on my work, which is what I try to use to get away from this. Sad, I get very sad about that. I often take it to the extreme. I worry about our future together . . . thinking this is it, we're done."

Guy also outlined how relational conflict, founded in part on "abandonment issues" for both, created a barrier to the emotional bond. "Our relationship is very tumultuous. It always has been. We are extremely volatile people. It is something we have worked a lot at over the years to not be so eruptive. So when we first moved in together – in those first three months of living together was hell. How we managed to stay together was beyond me. I actually at one point tore a door off it's hinge in an argument in a fit of rage. And I broke my hand another time because I punched the wall."

Being Invalidated in the Struggle to Bond

The Struggle to Bond may unfold where the emotional bond has been breached by relational insensitivity, violation of personal values, or ineffective communication. For Tim the emotional bond wavered in the context of parenting differences where she dismissed his competence and insight. "I've just felt invalidated, inconsequential, irrelevant, and it really bugged me." Being "a big stickler on confidentiality" the emotional bond wavered when Tim's wife breached their trust on something he had specified as important to keep private. "I was very upset and I felt very misunderstood and I felt that she did not understand how very very important that is to me in terms of a principle that I live by in my life. And she kind of laughed at me. Again I felt negated and inconsequential – that my feelings and thoughts on that issue weren't relevant to her."

Brad revealed how the role of personal characteristics of self and other can collide in the Struggle to Bond. "I'm quite sensitive to criticism. I think a dance that we have is that she'll be critical of me and critical of what I'm doing. I remember one time something about making the bed. I hadn't made the bed or clothes on the floor or something. I just took it very sensitively and she sort of slid in criticism. It's quite hurtful almost about 'how could you ever do something like that.' Like just not understanding how I could do something like that." When attempts to mitigate rifts through communication fail, the emotional bond waned for Brad. "I sort of said to her, 'that's hurtful to me.' She sometimes doesn't necessarily hear that. That's when I find it quite hurtful to me. So then the closeness is not there. If she doesn't respond back almost in an affirming way. Like if she disagrees or whatever then I feel like I haven't been heard, almost like my feelings haven't been heard. So if I reach out and she sort of smashes that or criticizes or calls it ridiculous or something along those lines, then that's quite insulting or hurtful to me. So the closeness wouldn't be there."

Being-Busy in the Struggle to Bond

In a much less toxic fashion the Struggle to Bond was found in the busy lives of many participants. The demands of career and active parenting seemed to keep many participants from dwelling in the embrace of the emotional bond. Peter outlined the condition of being-busy as part of the Struggle to Bond. "We've always made excuses I guess over the years. Because I'm really, really busy or she's really, really busy." He emphasized the complexity, elusiveness, and ultimately the simplicity of negotiating the Struggle to Bond. "It almost seems like it's a reward after going through this maze. There's a piece of cheese at the end of the maze. Life seems to be like that sometimes. It's like a maze. There's really no direction. At least sometimes you feel like that, not all the time. But there are times and when those times come if you realize that all we need to do is get on track, and I think she's probably the more in tune with that than I am. When she realizes that you know, we haven't been spending time together. And it's as simple as that."

For Chris the demands of work and family seemed to form his primary barrier to the emotional bond. He spoke of the distancing effect that his career has had on the emotional bond. "I have a very stressful job. I think lots of times I disconnect and allow myself to do that because I'm so preoccupied." Being consumed by their busy life and respective individuality Chris noted that the quality of their emotional bond was falling. "What has happened on occasion is that we can live together and sleep in the same bed, but we really don't have anything to do with each other for days at a time. We're independent and we have our own stuff. But I think I get more down during those periods and I think that I isolate myself more. It's the opposite to what I used to do."

Recently Chris' wife had commented on this very dilemma. "She says, 'You know I feel like I haven't talked to you for a month.' Because we're going a million miles an hour and our kids are in this, and our kids are in that. She's working in the evening and I'm working late." Although otherwise sustaining a good emotional bond, the Sense of Security seemed weakened in Chris's relationship. "I don't feel like she's there for me as much as I probably once did. And if you asked her, I'm probably sure she'd say the same. And again, it's because our circumstances have changed."

The Essence of the Struggle to Bond

The struggle to establish and maintain an emotional bond may affect the relationships of men in some form. The emotional bond does not necessarily seem to unfold on its own accord with particular ease or speed. Men may endure a roller coaster of hits and misses as they navigate barriers in this aspect of their relational lives. Ultimately the emotional bond may itself be experienced as the relative containment of disabling relational strife.

The Struggle to Bond unfolds in the relatively innocuous domain of everyday affairs. The emotional bond is all too easily neglected in the course of everyday living, as the activities of life consume opportunities for establishing and maintaining it. The Struggle to Bond surfaces in the inevitable differences between self and other. Here men confront the challenge of reconciling differences in relational and communication style, temperament, culture, commitment to work or family, pressures to change, and/or gaps in reciprocal acceptance.

Relational strife is sometimes quite severe, where being together seems more of a "problem" than a relationship. Here it is all too easy to turn away, to withdraw. The

Struggle to Bond unfolds in relational patterns of conflict, broken promises, and disappointment. Barriers are experienced in the interpersonal "dance" of reciprocal emotional hypersensitivity, criticism, invalidation, jealousy, insatiable yearning for closeness, misperception, and emotional injury. For others establishing an emotional bond is complicated by intrusions from childhood or adult relational history expressed in the form of tension, unattainable expectations, exaggerated partner imperfections, and distorted interpersonal exchanges.

The Maturity Theme

Clarifying the Path in Maturity

In the realm of relationality many men seemed at first unprepared and without focus. The meaning and intent of relationality was obscure. It seems that in order to obtain the emotional bond one has to achieve a sense of Maturity that reconciles the unclear intent of the relational domain. As a hurdle in establishing and maintaining the emotional bond, immaturity was constituted in the lack of direction or knowledge about the goal of relationality, as well as the lack of skill to steer a course in that realm.

Peter illustrated this condition in imagery. "It almost feels like you're on an ocean. You're floating around on a piece of wood or you feel like a piece of wood out on the ocean. And there's no direction. You might get blown over here. That might be for a little while. Then some rough waters come and you get blown back into the reef again. And it's not where you want to be and you hate to be there. And you don't know where you want to be. Yet you don't have any way of getting there because you got no oars, you got no waves, no means of paddling over there." Implicitly drawing his wife into the condition of Maturity, Peter described their shared challenge. "We've really winged it over the years. I guess we kind of almost experimented, not really knowing that there is a clear path, that there is a direction." Maturity unfolds therefore "as we get older and as we learn more about each other and develop some skills."

As a child of divorce Guy outlined how unprepared he was for relationality and the emotional bond. "I had absolutely no preconceived notion of what a relationship was. Anything I saw came from the media. My parents were divorced at an early age. My mother never remarried. My father was basically out of the picture. So I had no preconceived notions of how to behave in a relationship. None at all!" It is perhaps telling of the significance of the Maturity theme that Guy characterized this relational condition in infantile terms. "So I was learning to crawl right from the word go."

Albeit somewhat vague in his description, Nick informed the theme of Maturity as feeling "more grounded, more committed" and "knowing what I wanted" regarding agreement on the place of career upon undertaking his current marriage. He spoke of this as "me becoming or getting a better understanding of me and who I am." The theme of Maturity also emerged for Brad as a condition of intentional commitment to a relationship. "I got married very young with my previous wife. In this relationship I very much wanted to make the choice. It seems silly, but the previous relationship I got married because she was pregnant."

Significance in Maturity

For some participants the challenge of immaturity lay in the fact that relationality initially held relatively little importance. The emotional bond lacked personal meaning. In achieving Maturity the significance of the emotional bond is established more firmly.

Maturity unfolded for Tim as the development of personal insight and recognizing the personal significance of relationality. "I got to understand more about myself. I never really had taken the time to reflect about what relationships were. I don't think I knew the difference between love and sex. I kind of meshed those two prior to that." Karl also illuminated Maturity as establishing the significance of the emotional bond. Karl shared that as "a person who maybe didn't do to well on my first marriage, I really value a warm, loving, close relationship with someone." He contrasted his first and second marriages in the context of Maturity. "A second marriage is like a second chance and you realize how important this relationship is and how easily relationships can be damaged or lost." Karl shared the insight that the emotional bond was lacking in his first marriage. "We were too young and inexperienced to realize that maybe there was some essential thing missing." Being careful to assume responsibility and avoid blame, Karl clarified that "maybe it wasn't so much missing on her part as on my part."

Referring to the necessity of learning to negotiate relationality through experience and without guidance, Don bemoaned the fact that "no one really teaches you this stuff." For him Maturity was acquired over a history of unsuccessful relationships. "I guess each time I went through a relationship I learned something." Development of the Maturity involved a "process of elimination" as Don clarified what he did want in a relationship. Perhaps revealing more of an emotional bond than he seemed to acknowledge, Don spoke of the rejection by a woman much like his present wife. "It was much more crushing for me when she decided that this relationship wasn't going anywhere. Although I didn't know how much I was going to miss her until the relationship was over and I think the same thing would apply to my wife. It's just that I'm more aware of how much I would be hurt if she decided it was over."

Regulation in Maturity

In the Maturity of the emotional bond relational affective intensity may no longer hold a prominent place. Karl described this condition. "When you're younger you have wild expectations. If you don't constantly hear the fireworks and everything, then you think you're not in love anymore or something like that." He added, "as you get older there's a kind of maturity that says, boy this is good, this is really good!" Indeed, with Maturity greater responsibility for the emotional bond is assumed. "There's maybe a greater sense of responsibility on my part to the relationship to make sure that it's a good relationship. And a lot of the times I'm the one that reaches out the first time to hug or to hold or to touch." Karl clarified that in Maturity it is not so much that "expectations are ruined, but that I know I have to be part of what makes a good relationship more so."

What Don appeared to have acquired in achieving Maturity was a level of emotional stability. "I was gushy when young. I'm not anymore. I went into this relationship and into this marriage with my eyes open. I mean it's certainly emotional, emotion tempered by reason." Regarding his experience of being possessive in an earlier relationship, Don alluded to the regulative capacity that may be established in Maturity. "If you're young you have less intuitive understanding of how far you can let the other person go or how much you need to control or try to control what they do. So your controls on the relationship aren't necessarily as adept." Ultimately, Don illuminated the simple resolution of jealous impulses in Maturity. "As you get older presumably you also become aware of the fact that the chances that this relationship is going to fall apart because they're going to run off with somebody else becomes less and less of a concern." Alluding to the goal of Contentment obtained in the emotional bond, Don concluded, "that ultimately you did get complacent and you just want an easy life."

Finding Maturity in the Emotional Bond

Maturity may unfold in the context of relationality. In the embrace of the emotional bond Tim spoke of learning that his "insecurities were not about her." Alluding to the condition of Contentment he spoke of arriving at the place of "not needing to live on the edge anymore . . . not needing to kind of always be out there . . . be more with her in the moment . . . just you know going for walks and not spending a lot of time going out with the guys and doing that king of thing. So I think I learned to grow up because of her." Tim revealed, "that it took me a long time to drop being an adolescent and that's her place in my life." He spoke a good deal about "this struggle to grow up and to be mature and to form a bond with a woman, or somebody else in a relationship." Moreover, the challenge of Maturity may be rooted in "not knowing how to grow up and form a bond with another person." Along with others Tim identified himself as "someone who was not necessarily taught that very well" and as one who "had to go through a lot of trials and tribulations to learn it."

The Essence of Maturity

Relational maturity and experience emerged as significant features of Surviving the Journey. Having worked through the rigors of relational strife, and navigated a certain personal transformation where relational interests are clarified, there is an "aged feeling" to the emotional bond. The significance of the emotional bond itself is more clearly registered. With Maturity men have learned that the emotional bond is a necessary component in close relationships, without which shared-being has a barren quality.

In this theme men tire of the Struggle to Bond. The allure of simple relational harmony where "you just want an easy life" now overshadows the unclear intent of immature relating. There is a softening as you recognize personal vulnerability in the context of the emotional bond. Yet paradoxically trepidation about risk of abandonment is dispelled.

With the importance of an affectionate comfortable and companionate bond established, men turn more positively and comfortably to the relational domain. Having entered the relational field unprepared - because "no one teaches you this stuff" - with age and experience, skill and capacity are acquired to more effectively navigate its waters.

The Subverting Self Theme

To establish and maintain an emotional bond some men needed to intentionally suspend self-interest. Peter illuminated the place of Subverting-Self in cultivating the emotional bond with an image of a dark room. "I don't like going there and I feel guilty afterwards. It's almost like a vicious cycle. When these certain things happen I will almost intuitively jump into that cycle and I can almost predict what will happen. I can enter that room by choice, but you know what, I can decide how dark the room is and how far I take it. I can be in the middle of that room - there' nobody else there - I can be in the middle of that room and I can go right to the door right now. And all it is, is just a matter of maybe me swallowing my pride or just saying, 'You know what, maybe it was my fault. Maybe I just need to say I'm sorry' - even though I'm not feeling sorry - just so I can get out that door and get into where I want to be."

Clearly situating Subverting-Self with himself, Peter acknowledged that early on his "selfish attitude" had blocked the continued unfolding of the "really good times" that set the stage for a marriage founded on an emotional bond. The challenge of Subverting-Self required that he relinquish his expectation of order in the family. "I like order, I like consistency. I like to be able to be around my family and have everything function. Now is that reality? No." Later he shared, "that's where I kind of really fall down because I almost set myself up because nobody's perfect. I expect the best and I don't get it."

Don alluded to the condition of Subverting-Self acquired in relational experience. "I've learned a bit about how to deal with women, well to deal with myself perhaps is a better way of putting it." Referring to his history of being intolerant of people, Don illuminated the Subverting-Self theme. "So in time, what I had to learn was tolerance and forgiveness - and recognizing the difference. Being able to appreciate the other person for who they are. The thing is that in quite a few relationships I was in, I really hurt the woman because of my own stupidity or my own pig-headedness." Hence, with the capacity of Subverting-Self you are more tactful. Moreover, Subverting-Self may involve regulation of what Don described as "more of a sensation of love" experienced in an earlier relationship. With the overpowering affection of this sort the impulse to dominate needed regulating. Harboring a "fear that she might run off" Don reflected on the experience that "she wasn't a possession but she was like a possession." Ultimately, Don attributed the ease of relating with his current wife to what may be a default position of Subverting-Self. "I don't make big emotional demands on her I think."

John described the challenge of Subverting-Self when the experience of the emotional bond is weak. In the embrace of the emotional bond he experienced greater attunement to her. Conversely in its absence, "I tend to be selfish and not notice those things as much." Reflecting on personal responsibility in the Struggle to Bond, John spoke of a sense of helplessness in relational conflict. "When I'm frustrated though I never take it to the next level and put the effort into solving the problem. I always look for the easy solutions. They don't work. I feel helpless. I'll look for another solution. They don't work."

Referring to an event where his wife was troubled by difficulties at work, John illustrated his superficial approach to support. "I gave her the solution, don't pay any attention to them. And I know my wife, that's not the right answer. That's not what she would need to do. So she'll get very frustrated with me at that time for doing that. And I think I do that because at the time I was distracted by something else, a television set." John explained the nature of Subverting-Self required in his relationship. "I think if I felt more connected to her problem - probably what I'm not doing at the time is reading the emotion that she's got tied up in this – realizing that this is bigger than a small issue. So I do have trouble reading when the time is right, put the extra effort."

As a man who portrayed himself as highly self-indulgent to the point of addiction, Guy provided a thorough description of the problem and value of Subverting Self. He revealed the challenge of Subverting-Self in the face of unregulated self-indulgence that excluded significant others and sometimes led to addictive behaviors. "I don't want an emotional connection when I'm in that volatile place. When I'm in the throws of an addiction and I'm acting out and I'm doing these things. When I'm in those places it's not about her. It's not about other people. It's about me. It's about my needs are not being looked after. I'm not being taken care of." Ultimately the resolution of the Struggle to Bond required Subverting-Self for Guy. "Where I am able to put my desires and needs and feelings aside to truly care about other people." Guy emphasized the volitional dimension of Subverting-Self in removing the barrier of relational conflict. "I know what it takes to make her feel comfortable with our relationship. And it's whether or not I want to do those things to have her feel a sense of comfort in the relationship. And at times I'm selfish and self-motivated and I don't."

In exercising the capacity of Subverting-Self the games of relational conflict are relinquished. Guy confessed that he played "games" with his wife around her value of relational trust. "I am the person who will walk around and sneak around and be sneaky and throw things in her face and say, 'Don't you trust me?' And she doesn't trust me! And so the game gets played against each other – the button pusher right. And I knew right away – because I know my wife – I knew she was upset immediately. So instead of reacting to that and making it about her I didn't have to make it about her. I didn't have to make it about me."

The Essence of Subverting Self

In establishing and maintaining an emotional bond men negotiate the difficult realm of two competing worlds. With the Subverting Self theme they confront the necessary condition of suspending self-interest in the service of the emotional bond. Subverting Self involves taking perspective on the "larger scheme of things" and reconciling "that you are not the centre of the universe." In secure emotional bonds men competently navigate the terrain of competing worlds by striking a careful balance between surrendering the significance of self and asserting self-interests.

The mission of Subverting Self is formulated most prominently in the task of "being able to appreciate the other person for who they are" and extends to the understanding "that everybody has their own way of being." With this acceptance the impulse to control or change her is contained. Subverting Self means being receptive to her influence, and keeping commitments in the face of impulses to indulge self-interest. It involves competent emotional-regulation that returns you to the hold of the emotional bond following distressing experiences that have pulled you away. Subverting Self extends to a willing sacrifice in support of her interests, as well as enduring the cost of being emotionally supportive. Activation of Subverting Self involves the harmless surrendering of potentially divisive differences, of knowing when to "give in." It involves respectful indulgence that preserves dignity and the emotional bond when disputes are negotiated

The Emotional Closing Theme

Activation of the emotional bond may be impeded by a strong impulse to restrain Emotional Opening. In Emotional Closing the vulnerability inherent in opening oneself to the emotional bond seems to overpower its allure. Even when opening to the emotional bond was imminent Peter revealed how the risk of vulnerability can quickly deactivate the emotional connection. "But then something might come up or something that's said and you automatically want to close yourself in because you just don't want to get hurt." Faced with such vulnerability Brad described the emotional closing that protects the "hug feeling" of Contentment. "I take it in on myself. No it's mine. I guess that's a funny thing to say, but it is. It's mine. It's part of me. It's what I share, right. So I would pull it back in. I would just take that in and bring it into myself and close." Brad clarified the personal ownership of Emotional Closing in the emotional bond. "Well I have control over it. She has a participation in it. Maybe that's my ultimate stand on the hill?"

Emotional Closing seemed to unfold in the context of relational conflict wherein vulnerability was magnified for some men. Emotional Closing emerged surrounding the sometimes critical nature of Brad's wife. "I said to her 'that's hurtful to me,' that sort of thing. She sometimes doesn't necessarily hear that. That's where I find it quite hurtful. So then the closeness is not there. And it takes a while, that if she doesn't respond back almost in an affirming way. Like if she disagrees or whatever then I feel like I haven't been heard, almost like my feelings haven't been heard. And so if I reach out and she sort of smashes that or criticizes or calls it ridiculous or something along those lines, then that's quite insulting or hurtful to me. And so therefore then the closeness wouldn't be there." There is perhaps a certain paradox in that Emotional Closing seems to develop during the otherwise affectively charged condition of relational conflict. In this regard Emotional Closing appeared implicit in John's tendency to "dwell on the catastrophic" during relational rifts. Here John's Emotional Closing was implicit in his conviction that relational demise is imminent, of being "sure that this is it."

Of course Emotional Closing may unfold as a sort of putting on the brakes during early development of the emotional bond, as it did for Brad. "It seemed like we would get worried about the relationship and like how fast it was going and whether it was okay or not, almost judgments about the relationship. So then when we checked it out then it allowed us to sort of continue or take it further. And I think that there's a whole series of points where you could just say, no I don't want to go there, I don't want to go any further."

A good deal of the Struggle to Bond for Peter emerged in the challenge of Emotional Closing. In the face of relational conflict he described a tendency to withdraw emotionally. "The way I handle things or the way I handle stress is I get quiet and I become reserved and I don't talk very much. I can shut the whole world off. I can literally disappear - just tune the whole world right out." Held in the emotional closing of conflict gridlock the promise of the emotional bond weakens. "The longer you stay in that mode the more I have felt that there is no hope. You start to question whether or not you should be married and whether or not she's the right one." Clarifying that the resolution of conflict and opening to the emotional bond is "sometimes just an arms length away of talking." Peter noted that with the accumulation of past conflict and hurt "you almost give up, saying well you know what, if she's not going to try then I'm not going to try and you justify it and say what's the point." Although the barriers of the Struggle to Bond had dissipated somewhat for Peter and the sense of "hope" more prevalent Emotional Closing was still easily activated. "When you see things happen the first thing you think about is the negative right off the bat. You think, you know what, this is just like it used to be. Nothings ever changed. Nothings ever going to get better."

Continuing his image of the Contentment theme Peter illuminated the experience of being seized by the "misery" of Emotional Closing. "It would be like you're almost placed in darkness. You know that you're in this room and it's dark and you can't see anything. You know that there's a door in the room somewhere, and you know all you need to do is start checking the walls for this door. Yet you don't want to do that. You want to stay in the middle of the room. And you want to just kind of sulk for a little while and like you almost want to have a little pity party. And sometimes what I might do is maybe cause her to hurt a little more by not talking. I guess when they say misery loves company that's very true, because when I'm in there I want her - because she's so close - to feel the same. You know where you want to go, but it's taken away or for a moment, it's not considered. If you allow yourself to go there and dwell on it, it seems like that room gets darker and the walls spread out more and more and more. And if you don't act on it right away it seems like that room doubles in size right now. I would feel even more disconnected then and to the point where you go, well what's the point? You don't see any hope. You don't see any door because you're not looking for it but I choose to go there."

Peter provided a good deal of elaboration on this image of Emotional Closing, emphasizing the sense of being captured by this experience and then falling into despair. "You know where you want to go but it's almost like it's taken away or it's not even, for a moment, it's not considered. If you allow yourself to go there and dwell on it, it seems like that room gets darker or the walls get spread out more and more and more. And if you don't act on it right away it seems like that room doubles in size right now. I would feel even more disconnected then and to the point where you go, well what's the point completely? And you don't see any hope, you don't see any door because you're not looking for it, but I choose to go there." Notwithstanding the toxicity of this experience Emotional Closing seems to have its own allure. "I don't like going there and I feel guilty afterwards and so it's almost like it's a vicious cycle and when these certain things happen I almost will intuitively jump onto that cycle and I can almost predict what will happen next."

Although less dramatically, Mike also revealed a tendency to disengage from strong feeling. "I keep a lot of that into my, in myself. I don't open up a whole lot. I've been accused of that over the years." Indeed, more than any other participant Mike overtly endorsed the stereotypical image of masculinity where "you have to be the strong one, and no crying and you know, be firm." Faced with a critical health problem in the family Mike asserted, "I don't honestly, can't honestly say that I was distraught to the point where I needed a hug." When confronted with these struggles Mike noted, "I'm not much of a conversationalist with her in that kind of way. I keep a lot of that in myself, I don't open up a whole lot."

For some participants the Emotional Closing theme was illuminated in descriptions of past relationships in which the emotional bond had been weak. Emotional Closing was implicit in Brad's earlier comments regarding affective freedom in the Contentment theme. Not having "cried or expressed any type of emotion" in the ten years of his first marriage - keeping himself emotionally "solid and locked" – provides an implicit clue to the relational and emotional distancing of Emotional Closing. The theme of Emotional Closing was also intuited in Karl's comments about his personal barrier to the emotional bond in his first marriage. In this regard Karl described his reluctance to be emotionally open in counselling when attempting to rescue the marriage. "I was not a good client. I didn't want anything to come out at the counselling. Like I wasn't really open. Further illuminating the significance of the Contentment theme in the emotional bond Karl noted that his failed first marriage lacked that very quality. "But there was always something that just wasn't there. And I think on my part it was commitment, a lack of commitment. And that I never did feel that closeness right from the beginning." Although somewhat vaguely expressed and requiring an intuitive leap, Don's portrayal of himself as being "quite intolerant of people" may be a testament to the role of Emotional Closing in his past relationships.

The Essence of Emotional Closing

This theme describes the emotional detachment of relational withdrawal. In the context of relational conflict, self-interest and adversarial posture, "walls and roadblocks" are built. In this standoff the possibility of freeing and opening dialogue, that could reconcile the emotional bond, is suspended. You feel "alone" and "miserable" on your side of unspoken relating.

There is an impulse to escape from relational strife by turning inward and away. When sustained this leads to questioning "whether or not you should be married . . . whether or not she's the right one." You "don't want to be here." It is "more pleasant being apart." Feeling alone in the relationship, expectation of relational demise is cultivated, "you almost give up."

In this aspect of the Struggle to Bond "the first thing you think about is the negative right off the bat." Attention is drawn to her imperfections. Consumed by the immediacy of emotional pain, the future seems remote. There is a closing down as emotional experience and expression are restrained. Tender feelings are made "solid and locked" outside of reach.

A sense of purposefulness permeates this theme. There is ownership in authorizing formation of the emotional bond by sharing oneself, a gesture that can be rescinded. In the grasp of Emotional Closing there can be a subtle awareness of the lure of the emotional bond, that it is "sometimes just an arms length away of talking." Yet, there is hesitation, where "you almost want to stay there for a while," even an urge to draw her into this negative affective realm, to have her "feel the same."

Inevitably there is a release from Emotional Closing, and the goal of emotional bond becomes clear – "you know where you want to go." A broader perspective unfolds that the condition of Emotional Closing has something to do with how you are "feeling inside." Obtaining insight into the role that volition plays in this "vicious cycle" fosters further understanding that your own being stands in the way of the emotional bond. Even in these moments of relief, it seems that the condition of detachment lingers eternally nearby. A lapse in relational mindfulness can quickly and easily sweep you up, pulling you into the dark and rapidly unfolding expanse of Emotional Closing.

Goodness of Fit Evaluations

Eight participants provided goodness of fit evaluations; Karl, Adrian, Peter, Don, Rod, Chris, Tim, and John. All responding participants validated the general psychological structure; however, they provided clarification and correction on certain aspects. Although there was some overlap, corrective feedback did not form an identifiable pattern. Most of the responding participants validated the psychological structure with particular enthusiasm. Adrian, for example provided a broad validation of the thematic structure, noting that there was little of significance that he did not find consistent with his experience. As one who had expressed skepticism regarding psychological methodology during the interview, Don expressed surprise at the accuracy of the psychological structure regarding his personal experience. Don went on to consider that he was perhaps more "normal" than previously thought. Peter validated the overall thematic structure as corresponding to his experience; however, more than most others he indicated that the some aspects of Settling In and Joining were optimal conditions that he aspired too but often found elusive. Not only did the content of Peter's interview most strongly illuminate Surviving the Journey, but his validation comments also more thoroughly addressed that aspect of relational experience than those provided by other participants.

There was a remarkable and enthusiastic consensus among the responding participants regarding endorsement of the higher order theme of Settling In, especially regarding the Contentment theme. Peter provided particularly strong endorsements of themes in this context, particularly that of Contentment and Hardiness. Indeed, he reiterated that the experience of Contentment was the "reward" that he sought in the "work" of relating that he was engaged in. He especially validated the notion of relinquishing censorship, being valued as a person, and the allure contained in the experience of Contentment. Peter also clarified that in the Presence theme his experience of Contentment hinged more on temporary discrete episodes, such that the emotional bond did not sustain as a subtle and ever-present condition.

Rod noted that Contentment, and Hardiness resonated most strongly with his experience of the emotional bond. Chris also shared that Settling In "rang particularly true" for him. Although generally endorsing the broader aspects of the Contentment theme Tim shared that the sense of arrival and the allure of Contentment did not fit with his experience, nor did he experience a lingering sense of absence in the embrace of the emotional bond. John shared that the higher order theme of Settling In "fit well" with his experience. Nonetheless, John clarified that he still engages in a continuing struggle around censoring himself and requires a good deal of time to relinquish this practice even though he still experienced the broader themes of Contentment, Hardiness, Bonding Space and Presence.

Although all participants did not provide relational descriptions of experience that specifically illuminated the Hardiness theme, there was near unanimity on validating this theme on goodness of fit evaluations. It is notable that as the one dissenter on the Hardiness theme Tim had provided fairly compelling descriptions of that experience. The reason for this discrepancy is unclear. Don commented that finding a partner is part of "the game of life" and suggested that relief from the stress of that game obtained in a stable relationship may contribute to the experience of Hardiness by freeing up more energy for other aspects of being-in-the-world.

The higher order theme of Joining also obtained strong endorsement. Again Peter provided a broad endorsement of the lower order themes that compose Joining. While endorsing the Being-Known theme he commented about the "risk" involved in sharing deeper personal aspects of himself, suggestive of the challenge inherent in the Emotional Opening theme. Peter explained that the deeper sharing of Being-Known required a sense of "trust" that could be drawn from the experience of Contentment. Moreover, the condition of reciprocal intuiting of thoughts, actions, and comments was a "byproduct" of spending time together, but was still "hard to do!" Peter provided specific endorsement of the significance of spending time together in the relational dialogue of Consensus as a condition that strengthens the emotional bond. In his endorsement of Companionship

Peter noted that it is also important for him to have "one or two good male friends to compliment this."

John observed that the thematic structure of Joining fit well with his experience "with no exceptions." The significance of the Settling In themes were for Rod followed in importance by the Bonding Space, Companionship, Being-Known, and the Sense of Security, and in conjunction with Maturity seemed to combine in a cumulative and recursive process as the emotional bond solidified. Tim provided a broad and strong endorsement of the higher order Joining theme albeit with two qualifications. He validated the Bonding Space theme and noted that the rarity of experiencing this theme was not problematic for him because of his efforts to intentionally "create" moments for the Bonding Space. Tim also clarified that the mitigating effect on isolation and significance of having "one good friend" in the Companionship theme was not highly significant for him because of the breadth of his social network. Participants were generally in agreement on their validation of the Being-Known theme. Nonetheless, Karl and Chris expressed some discomfort with the notion of being thoroughly known by their partner, preferring to retain some aspects of private being. Notwithstanding the extent to which his descriptions informed the Being-Known theme Chris shared on follow-up that he found it difficult to allow this experience to fully unfold, and attributed his reticence to general masculine and family enculturation. Don emphasized the importance of acceptance and enjoyment of differences regarding the Consensus theme. Chris noted that rather than "it feeling better than being alone," in the Companionship theme, "it feels better than being with anyone else." Chris also described his concern about taking the Sense of Security for granted, but noted that as he matured this has decreased.

Rod was specific in dismissing the significance of Emotional Opening for him. In this regard he shared that being emotionally open has never been particularly salient for him, but something that apparently freely unfolds. In contrast, Peter shared that as an "ultimate" goal of Emotional Opening was "tough to do" and "takes time." He revealed an understanding that Emotional Opening involves a dual process of trust in "allowing yourself to go there" and the inviting presence that unfolds with her acknowledgement of you. Don's comments suggest that Emotional Opening for men may be contingent on women first signaling their emotional openness before men join in that affective space. Moreover, he shared the impression that women may not be particularly receptive to the softening that masculine Emotional Opening could entail. In this Don observed that women may avoid men who "too willingly" demonstrate Emotional Opening. Perhaps it should be noted that Don's comments on Emotional Opening provide distinct insight into and to some degree validate the Emotional Closing theme.

There was some agreement among responding participants regarding the higher order theme of Surviving the Journey. Nonetheless, participants invalidated themes and aspects of themes more frequently here than in any other aspect of the analysis. Not at all surprising was Peter's strong endorsement of the themes that illuminate Surviving the Journey. Indeed, Peter shared that reviewing the themes related to Settling In and Joining was quite uplifting; however, that positive feeling evaporated quite rapidly upon encountering the text outlining Surviving the Journey. Many participants endorsed the experience of the Struggle to Bond, with Don observing that it is "a bloody miracle" that relationships endure. Don cautioned, however, that he did not want just the "easy life" described in this theme, indicating instead his desire for an interesting and fulfilling life with a woman. Peter considered that the roller coaster of hits and misses was consistent with his experience, and that the problem of "time" had certainly been a factor in the Struggle to Bond for him.

Regarding the Maturity theme John agreed that there is an "aged feeling" to his experience of the emotional bond and a "tiring of the Struggle to Bond." Nonetheless, he found that the Struggle to Bond might not be a completely relinquished even when the emotional bond is established. Indeed John suggested that one may "revert" to this struggle throughout a relationship, although the frequency of such struggles may decrease as the relationship "ages." Although generally endorsing the structure of Surviving the Journey Don astutely observed that activation of the emotional bond had to be more than containment of the Struggle to Bond, and that the higher order themes of Settling In and Joining surely play a key role in establishing and sustaining the emotional bond. Don also shared his impression that the condition of Maturity may play a role in the Subverting Self theme to the extent that the impulse to control can be more easily relinquished. Peter specifically endorsed the notion that in Maturity the significance of the emotional bond becomes evident, as well as the experience of having been poorly prepared for negotiating the adult relational world. Peter shared his impression that socialization "teaches" the "selfishness" at the centre of Subverting Self, but also that relinquishing self in this theme can be "hard to do if you are not used to it." Regarding the Emotional Closing theme Peter emphasized the conditions of "protection" and "escape" in response to the experience of feeling "hurt."

Rod was notable in his indication that the Emotional Opening, Subverting Self, and Emotional Closing themes did not resonate with his experience in any meaningful fashion. In this regard Rod shared that it has been easy for him to be emotionally open and disinclined to control his partner, even in relationships that failed. Tim was unique in his blanket rejection of the Struggle to Bond and the Emotional Closing theme. Although he partially endorsed the Subverting Self theme regarding the challenge of being "other focused" he did not consider that there was any problem of Subverting Self, but rather considered that his experience of the emotional bond was more "liberating" than subverting.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DISCUSSION

The principles of phenomenological methodology establish that caution must be exercised regarding generalization from the results of phenomenological inquiry. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to consider how the results of the present phenomenological analysis fit with existing research and discussion regarding masculinity, relationships, love, and attachment. Foremost in this regard is to consider the current results in the context of previous phenomenological research into heterosexual relationships.

Relational Masculinity in Emotional Bond

It is noteworthy at the outset that all the men who participated in this study displayed and commented on the difficulty they had generating concrete descriptions of the emotional bond during the interview. Participants at first displayed what seemed to be a preference for offering commentary or opinion about their relationships or relationships in general. Without prompting to reflect on concrete experience, participants were prone to offer more semantic and nondescript accounts of their experiences. Most participants explained that they were unaccustomed to reflecting on the emotional bond and their relationship in such a concrete experiential fashion. All but one participant did, however, provide sufficient descriptions of their experience to permit illumination of the phenomenology of the emotional bond. Moreover, most participants reported that the interview process and content were thought provoking.

At first glance participant response patterns, and reported difficulty describing concrete experience, appear somewhat consistent with the stereotypical characterization of men as non-relational and affectively restrained. Nonetheless, the obtained phenomenological structure of the emotional bond could suggest otherwise, even to the extent of questioning why men were ever characterized as non-relational. It is plausible that men in this sample are not so much non-relational and emotionally detached, but unaccustomed to reflect intentionally and concretely on their relationship in terms of an emotional bond. This apparent lack of reflection may be viewed as characteristic of men; however, it is equally plausible that the experience of an emotional bond is obtuse and truly difficult to describe with narrative precision. In all probability it may be little more than an artifact of the prereflective nature of the lived world that phenomenological inquiry turns to. Phenomenological inquiry into women's experience of the emotional bond would help clarify these speculations.

The higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining* strongly suggest that, at least in this sample, a form of masculine relationality is contained in the experience of the emotional bond. When interrogated phenomenologically, it is evident that these men negotiate the lived world very much as communal beings. This relationality is portrayed in a distinct form represented in the thematic structure; however, the extent to which this may differ from feminine relationality cannot be established in the context of the study conducted.

If there is a distinct relational masculinity, it may be reflected in the unremarkable tone of the experience of emotional bond. Although there are energizing, exciting, liberating, and empowering dimensions to the emotional bond, they are overshadowed by the essential simple and calming aspects bereft of notable intensity. There is a depth and richness to affective tone and interpersonal exchange in the emotional bond, but it does not appear to unfold with passionate intensity. Consequently, the stereotypical characterization of men as agentic and non-relational may be a distortion based on expectations that relationality requires an intentionally passionate and overtly expressed intensity. It is notable in this regard that several participants explicitly described their experience of emotional bond in terms of simply feeling "comfortable." This description was offered somewhat tentatively and defensively, as if expecting that such a characterization would be condemned from some quarter. This is perhaps a testament to Cancian's (2000, pp. 312-323) concern regarding the "feminization" of relationality wherein alternative ways of being in close relationships are invalidated. Of course this presupposes that women experience the emotional bond differently, which is not investigated in the current study.

Aspects of the higher order theme of *Joining* also illuminate what may be a distinct masculine relationality inherent in the emotional bond. The reciprocal self-disclosure of *Being-Known*, the common ground of shared-being in *Consensus*, and the togetherness of C*ompanionship*, underscore the relational nature of masculinity where self and other join in communal existence. Although perhaps not articulated as dramatically as a more substantial communal orientation might specify, these three themes establish the possibility of masculine relationality distinct from the non-relational characterization of the stereotypical agentic male. The significance of the *Sense of Security* theme further extends the possibility of a relational masculinity that encompasses reciprocal dependence and support. The emergence of this theme appears to undermine the notion that men are necessarily pursuing the agenda of establishing a self highly differentiated from the immediate communal world. In the established emotional bond, the experience of a *Sense of Security* situates masculinity squarely in the relational domain. Once again we are unable to specify the extent that this may or may not differ for women.

The *Emotional Opening* theme may be particularly informative regarding relational masculinity that is affectively laden. As opposed to being emotionally, personally, and relationally constrained, this phenomenological inquiry suggests that men may be confronting a significant challenge of affective vulnerability in the experience of emotional bond. Expression of masculine relationality would appear to require successful reconciling of the negative affect that accompanies risk of emotional harm and personal rejection. Having successfully negotiated this challenge the positive experience of enriched emotional texture and expression makes masculine relationality very much an affectively charged domain; however, this should not be construed as an intensely passionate affective tone.

In this regard the stereotypical impression of an agentic male who is invested in generating a separate identity marked by emotional and relational detachment, may be better understood as the cautious confrontation of emotional vulnerability. Men who display agentic attributes may well be those who simply have not yet successfully negotiated the domain of emotional and personal vulnerability of the emotional bond. Consequently, the stereotypical agentic masculinity could be considered a default position in the face of insurmountable vulnerability, rather than the primary masculine agenda. Under these circumstances it seems reasonable to question whether men are more sensitive to or experience more severe emotional vulnerability than women? Moreover, if that is the case, is it attributable to lower levels of competence in regulating the experience of emotional vulnerability? Additional research would be needed to clarify these issues.

The stereotypical agentic masculinity is illuminated in some respects in the higher order theme of *Surviving the Journey*; however, here too relationality remains an essential component of these men's experience. Some aspects of the *Struggle to Bond* are modestly reminiscent of agentic masculinity that neglects relationality or maintains barriers to it through the conflict of prominent differences between self and other. Still, these barriers of relational strife unfold in the communal context, outside of which there would be no strife or perhaps even a need to designate an agentic masculinity.

The *Subverting Self* and *Disengaged Closing* themes most clearly approximate stereotypical aspects of agentic masculinity, with the emphasis on self-interest and emotional detachment. In this regard the experience of men in this sample did reflect an element of the "discrete self" of agentic masculinity; however, the communal domain was not far removed, as these men remained inextricably engaged in the *Struggle to Bond*. Moreover, the struggle pertains more to relinquishing the discrete self in favour of communal being, than of struggling to construct or sustain a discrete self. Indeed, the relevance of *Subverting Self* only emerges in the context of obtaining, reestablishing, and sustaining the emotional bond. The *Maturity-Experience* theme further suggests that what may appear to be an expression of agentic masculinity may be more appropriately understood as an expression of masculinity that is poorly informed about and unprepared for negotiating the relational domain. When men enter relationships without knowing the intention of the exercise - particularly regarding pursuit of an emotional bond – and without the skills to effectively navigate the communal realm, they may well resort to conduct that would appear agentic in form.

Finally, it should be observed that the lived experience of the emotional bond did not significantly illuminate aspects related to gender identity, socialization influences, or complicity in hegemonic/patriarchal masculinity. A very small proportion of participants made reference to their contained emotionality, with one characterizing himself as highly identified as a stereotypical unemotional male. Several participants made reference to inadequate socialization processes that left them feeling unclear and unskilled in the relational domain (i.e. *Maturity*). Nonetheless, specific concrete experiences that distinguish male gender role identification were not prominent in descriptions of the experience of the emotional bond. Notwithstanding the proposition that masculinity is invisible, it does seem remarkable that gender was not a significant aspect of relationality for these men. Although one could infer the presence of hegemonic masculinity in the *Struggle to Bond*, there is nothing to suggest that power and dominance were particularly active in the phenomenology of the emotional bond for men. If anything issues of control and dominance pertain to a struggle to dominate self in the service of relationality.

Emotional Bond in the Relational Domain

The phenomenological structure of the emotional bond, represented in the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining*, may be construed as reflecting some aspects of research on marriage and relationship. Although past inquiry into marital relationships has given such matters comparatively little attention, the experience of an emotional bond, expressed as *Contentment*, may well play a critical role in relationship satisfaction. Indeed, replacing the notion of satisfaction in marital research with that of contentment may shed a completely different light on the relational domain.

Given the significance of men's experience of the emotional bond observed in the present study, the possibility of obtaining relationship satisfaction without the experience of *Settling In* and *Joining* seems remote. Certainly, the experience of *Contentment* and the supporting cast of *Bonding Space*, *Being-Known*, *Consensus*, *Companionship*, *Sense of Security*, and *Emotional Opening* resemble the conditions of emotional stability and engagement, differentiation, support, and positive affectivity that have been outlined for sustaining satisfying relationships (Dehle, Larsen, & Landers, 2001; Flora & Segrin, 2000; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001; Skowron, 2000; Wiegel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999). Moreover, the protective function of relationship satisfaction regarding the effects of negative affectivity observed by Flora and Segrin (2000) is somewhat reminiscent of the *Hardiness* theme obtained from the experience of *Contentment*.

The *Presence* and *Bonding Space* themes may be informative about the meaning of relationship maintenance behaviors to men (Weigel & Ballard-Reish, 1999). It is perhaps the opportunity to experience those more intense episodes of memorable and consuming *Contentment*, in the various forms found in the *Bonding Space*, which could be more usefully understood as relational maintenance conditions for men. Moreover, the observed decline in marital satisfaction over time may well reflect a failure to rejuvenate the emotional bond with those more intense experiences of *Contentment* over the course of a relationship - a condition that some participants confronted.

Notwithstanding Skowron's (2000) observation that emotionally cutoff husbands report greater marital satisfaction, it is notable that relatively little consideration has been given to phenomenon resembling *Emotional Opening* in scholarly inquiry into the relational domain. Although it cannot be inferred that either the experience of *Contentment* or *Emotional Opening* would necessarily influence relational satisfaction, it is intuitively appealing to consider that *Emotional Opening* may need to be in place to effectively sustain satisfying relationships. Similarly, a specific correspondence cannot be made between research findings on the role of perceived inadequate support in marital dissatisfaction (Dehle, Larsen, & Landers, 2001) and the *Sense of Security* theme. Nonetheless, a reading of the description of this theme does invoke a greater understanding of how the absence or loss of a *Sense of Security* would undermine marital satisfaction. Undoubtedly, without the backdrop of a *Sense of Security* men and women may well be left with the dissatisfying sense of something missing which they are then ever in search of.

The phenomenological structure of *Settling In* and *Joining* is more clearly represented in some of the research on love. The intimacy dimension of Sternberg's (1986) triangular theory of love approximates some aspects of *Contentment*, *Being-Known*, *Consensus*, *Companionship*, and *Sense of Security*, although without the richness and specificity obtained in phenomenological analysis. If experiences resembling the *Bonding Space*, and *Temporal Presence* were added to Sternberg's (1986) conceptualization, intimacy and the emotional bond may seem indistinguishable. It is arguable, however, that the discrete experience of *Contentment* distinguishes the emotional bond as a more broadly textured, complete, and transformational phenomenon than the warmth of feeling close or connected articulated in Sternberg's form of intimacy. Although Sternberg's theory is not clear on this matter, it would be hard to conceive of either intimacy or emotional bond without integrating dimensions reminiscent of the *Emotional Opening* theme, or the

Presence theme. Hence, the significance of emotional vulnerability, enriched emotional texture of experience, and the presence of contrasting awareness of what it is like to be without the emotional bond are not sufficiently illuminated in Sternberg's intimacy.

Sternberg's (1986) reference to "latent intimacy" that belies a decrease in intimacy over time may be reminiscent of the subtler and continuous aspect of *Contentment* reflected in the *Presence* theme. In the latter theme, however, the experience of *Contentment* could hardly be considered latent. Rather, it may be lingering on the edge of awareness, a condition that may not only be necessary to sustain healthy relating, but may also be crucial for personal well-being. Hence, it would seem maladaptive for the emotional bond to settle into latency. Indeed, the emotional bond reflected in the experience of *Contentment* may hold a more significant and enduring place in relationality than Sternberg seems to give the dimension of intimacy.

Generally Sternberg's (1986) "hot" and "cold" dimensions are not well illuminated in the current results. Various participants made reference to passionate aspects early in relationships and the continued importance of sexual passion; however, these were uninformative regarding the phenomenological structure of emotional bond. Although romantic and sexual passion may play an important role in men's relationships the results of this phenomenological inquiry would suggest that they play a quite limited role, if any, in the experience of the emotional bond. Hence, the passion of romance and sexuality may be relational phenomena that are quite distinct from that of an emotional bond.

Sternberg's (1986) suggestion that passion may be experienced as a yearning for union does modestly resemble the impulse to move toward *Contentment*; however, participant descriptions portray this pursuit of emotional bond as more clearly differentiated in texture than the concept of union suggests and without the level of arousal implicit in a passionate yearning. The implication that the motive of passion may be to fulfill psychosocial needs of self-esteem and self-actualization does correspond somewhat to the general sense of well-being and self-assurance contained in the *Contentment*, *Hardiness* and *Sense of Security* themes. Notwithstanding the apparent significance of experiencing the emotional bond, the desire to sustain it once obtained, and the appealing consequences of well-being, there is little in the obtained phenomenological structure to suggest that these participants were necessarily drawn to this experience with a particular passion.

A few participants made reference to Sternberg's (1986) "cold" aspect of love regarding their commitment to a particular relationship. For a few men this was especially relevant in their descriptions of *Surviving the Journey*. As observed by Sternberg the commitment was most significant at times of difficulty as some men negotiated the *Struggle to Bond*, difficulties *Subverting Self*, or extracting themselves from the hold of *Emotional Closing*. It is notable in this regard that the relevance of commitment in relationship seemed to dissipate in the presence of an experience of *Contentment*. With the emotional bond in place the relevance of relational commitment or a cognitive decision regarding commitment seems to dissipate. Although predictions such as those made by Lemieux and Hale (2000) cannot be made from the current findings regarding the relationship between commitment and relationship satisfaction among more mature men, it is notable that commitment did not emerge as a significant aspect of men's relational experience regarding the emotional bond in the present study.

Sternberg's (1986) companionate love certainly resembles the phenomenological structure of the emotional bond, again more richly described in the latter. The unremarkable tone of the *Contentment* theme does suggest a relative absence of passion. Nonetheless, care must be taken regarding inferences that companionate love and the emotional bond are one in the same. The results of the present study do not permit a conclusion that the relationships of these men were dispassionate, or that the unremarkable tone of the emotional bond is a consequence of dissipated passion over time. Indeed, we may be better served by understanding that the emotional bond is quite distinct from the passion associated with love, and may not be experienced with particular intensity at any point in a relationship. That is, the very essence of the emotional bond is found in its qualitative aspects more than quantitative ones. Finally, it should be reported that participants described relationship experiences that variously fit Sternberg's notions of infatuated, empty, romantic, fatuous, and consummate love. These conditions were not, however, essential or enduring aspects of their relationships for most participants. Rather, they were typically relevant to previous unsuccessful relationships or constituted a phase through which they passed in the development of a current relationship.

Although credible associations between the obtained phenomenological structure of the emotional bond and love styles cannot be made, some observations are notable. The essence of the emotional bond reflected in *Settling In* and *Joining* shows little resemblance to the Ludus love style typically associated with men (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986; Levey & Davis, 1988). Rather, the companionate love style of Storge, more closely fits aspects of the experience of the emotional bond illuminated in the

Consensus, *Companionship*, and *Sense of Security* themes. The aforementioned comments regarding passion apply to the Eros love style to the extent that results of the current study do not reflect such passion in the experience of the emotional bond; however, the experience of passion in other aspects of relationality cannot be excluded. Participant comments about their relational experience suggest that aspects of Eros, Mania, and Pragma, loves styles may have been operative in past unsuccessful relationships or at different stages of current relationships. Indeed, the impression obtained was that for some participants Mania might have played a role in the *Struggle to Bond* and *Subverting Self*, while Eros played a role in sustaining the relationship through the *Struggle to Bond*.

It is perhaps useful to consider that the higher order theme of *Surviving the Journey* reflects the general tone of marital research that investigates enduring difficulties couples have negotiating the relational domain. At least half of the participants in this study had experienced divorce or demise of long-term cohabiting relationships. On the whole men in this sample knew only too well the challenges of relating commonly investigated in marital research, although most participants were not experiencing immediate relational strife.

It is interesting to consider the concepts of cognitive organization (Showers & Kevlyn, 1999) in the context of *Surviving the Journey*. Although entirely speculative, some aspects of the *Struggle to Bond*, and especially *Subverting Self* and *Emotional Closing*, may reflect difficulty making the transition from compartmentalization to integrative organization of negative partner characteristics. Difficulty negotiating or completing the challenges of *Surviving the Journey* may also reflect inadequacy in generating positive distortions or idealization of a relationship (Karney & Frye, 2002; Sprecher, 1999). Moreover, expression of negative affect, poor eye contact and insufficient husband speaking during verbal exchanges (Flora & Segrin, 2000), as well as use of maladaptive attributions (Karney & Bradbury, 2000) may well have been the sorts of issues that participants confronted in *Surviving the Journey*.

Commentary regarding the role of personality and the obtained phenomenological structure of the emotional bond is necessarily limited. Nonetheless, it is conceptually appealing to consider that some aspects of personality could be instrumental in determining the status of emotional bond represented in *Settling In* and *Joining*, similar to the manner in which personality traits influence marital satisfaction (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000). For example, it may be necessary to possess certain personal attributes that would permit activation of *Contentment* by relinquishing striving and self-censoring, as well as to self-regulate vulnerability in *Emotional Opening*. Similarly, the presence of personal characteristics conducive to generating aspects of *Being-Known*, *Consensus*, *Companionship*, *Sense of Security*, or *Emotional Opening* would surely aid in the establishment and maintenance of an emotional bond. With respect to mate selection by similarity or complementarity (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000), it should be noted that the *Consensus* theme appears consistent with the finding that similarity of partner personality may be particularly important for men in relationship (Arrindell & Luteijn, 2000). However, within the bounds of the current study, the significance of the *Consensus* them cannot be presumed to suggest that there is a tangible gender difference in this regard.

Personality characteristics that exacerbate conditions inherent in the *Struggle to Bond*, *Subverting Self*, and *Emotional Closing* could impede attainment of an emotional bond. Although there are clear interpersonal aspects in the *Struggle to Bond*, the overall tone of *Surviving the Journey* suggests a predominantly internal struggle that could easily be rooted in personality dynamics. Some aspects of the *Subverting Self* and *Emotional Closing* themes could well reflect mediating effects of personality traits that maintain these two challenges at a more intense level or for longer than is functional. It is beyond the scope of the present discussion and findings to specify relevant personality traits. Nonetheless, dimensions from the "Big Five" personality model (see Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000), such as extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, would be good candidates for further inquiry related to promoting conditions for *Settling In* and *Joining*. Neuroticism, trait anxiety, trait anger, and negative affectivity could be good candidates for further inquiry into personality characteristics that exacerbate the challenges of the *Struggle to Bond*, *Subverting Self*, and *Emotional Closing*.

Notwithstanding these considerations regarding personality, the phenomenological structure obtained endeavours to capture the essence of the emotional bond that would in all probability supercede individual differences. Indeed, the aggregate structure of *Settling In*, *Joining*, and *Surviving the Journey* arguably speak to the presence of what may be better considered as a process that this sample of men negotiated in establishing and maintaining the emotional bond. Although personality attributes may enhance or impair functional negotiation of this process, the structure of that process would be expected to remain the same. Hence, care should be taken to avoid inferences that different personality traits would correspond to any particular aspect of the phenomenological structure.

Finally, consideration should be given to the different ways of relating inherent in the phenomenological structure obtained in the higher order *Joining* theme. It is conceivable that some relationships may be predicated on certain sub-themes more than others. Hence, in some relationships one or more of the themes of *Being-Known*, *Consensus*, *Companionship*, *Sense of Security* or even *Emotional Opening* could form the central aspect around which relationality is organized and sustained, without a significant role for *Contentment*. Indeed, on the surface two participants portrayed their experience of relationship in just this fashion. The current study does not permit conclusions or predictions in this regard. Nonetheless, it could be fruitful for future research to investigate the relative importance of the *Joining* sub-themes in relationship satisfaction and maintenance, or whether enduring and satisfying relationships can truly be obtained without the emotional bond found in *Contentment*.

Attachment and the Emotional Bond

This inquiry set out to investigate the phenomenon of the emotional bond. In the process it would seem that the lived experience of many of the principles and research findings related to adult attachment theory have been illuminated in descriptive form. Considering that the essence of the emotional bond was validly apprehended, some aspects of the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining* do approximate the concept of secure attachment. To the best of my knowledge the condition of secure attachment founded in the experience of emotional bond has not been as fully elaborated elsewhere. Arguably this phenomenological description brings the notion of secure adult attachment alive and informs us more thoroughly about this optimal relational objective than do the formal operational definitions of attachment styles and dimensions found in quantitative studies.

The combined themes of *Contentment*, *Hardiness*, and the *Sense of* Security may well capture the experience of a secure base and the sense of felt security that is so central to attachment. The experiences of comfortable well-being and fulfillment, sense of relief and relaxation, freedom to be an authentic self, harmony in relating, the sense of arrival, as well as the reconciling of a positive sense of self and others contained in *Contentment* may directly tap the core condition of felt security proposed by attachment theory. In this theme the significance of the psychological, versus the physical, nature of felt security is more clearly established in adult relating. With the "safety net" described in the *Sense of Security* theme the experience of a secure base of attachment is not only reiterated, but also more clearly and concretely established.

The "inner resource" (Mikulincer & Florian, 1998) implicit in the *Hardiness* theme arguably sets the stage for competent exploration of the world that unfolds from felt security in attachment theory. The *Hardiness* theme may be construed as something that would have to be in place for the adult version of exploration to unfold as the adaptive negotiation of stress and separation in the lived world. Although it is not specifically illuminated in study results, establishing the conditions inherent in the *Hardiness* theme may well contribute to the capacity for affect regulation that accrues from secure attachment (Sroufe, 1996, pp. 172-191).

As predicted by attachment theory, the experience of *Settling In* and *Joining* are integrally linked to involvement with a spousal attachment figure. The reciprocal condition specified in adult attachment where support is exchanged between spouses (West & Sheldon-Keller, 1994) is clearly outlined in the *Sense of Security* theme. Once again the texture and content of felt security is elaborated in this theme as a psychological condition more than is typically articulated in commentary about adult attachment. Moreover, the condition of reciprocity is more broadly elaborated in the phenomenological structure obtained, to the extent that reciprocal exchange extends directly to the conditions of *Being-Known* and *Emotional Opening*, and more subtly to *Consensus* and *Companionship*. In theorizing about adult attachment, therefore, the condition of reciprocal exchange may need to be extended beyond provision of care-giving support, to reciprocity in depth of personal knowledge between spouses, as well as meeting in the vulnerable space of emotional closeness. Similarly, adult attachment theory may be better informed by considering the reciprocal conditions inherent in the harmony of common ground and the companionate alliance contained in the *Consensus* and *Companionship* themes.

The phenomenological structure contained in *Settling In* and *Joining* also suggests the need for theory to more clearly delineate adult secure attachment as a relational objective in itself, distinct from the supportive and protective role that it presumably fills. Results of the present study suggest that at least in the form of an emotional bond, security in adult attachment may be substantially more than a responsive support system activated at times of distress. Indeed, the well-being obtained in *Contentment* and the broader aspects of the higher order theme of *Joining* extend well beyond the notion of attachment security as a corrective system that initiates support in response to distress. Although the *Sense of Security* acts as one of the conditions in which the emotional bond unfolds as the experience of *Contentment*; however, the latter is arguably the prime objective, without which the former may ring hollow.

The typical portrayal of the attachment system as latent or disengaged until distress activates the system may, therefore, need to be refined regarding adult attachment. The current phenomenological inquiry would suggest that attachment might not be idling in a neutral position waiting for activation by attachment distress. Intuiting of the *Presence* and the *Bonding Space* themes would suggest that attachment security inherent in the emotional bond is a continuously, albeit subtly, activated condition. Moreover, activation of the more significant moments of *Contentment* in those special places, events, and gestures of the *Bonding Space* appear to occur most significantly as positive generative episodes devoid of particular distress. Hence, attachment in the form of an emotional bond becomes a generative process that is not necessarily in the service of repair to attachment distress.

Intuiting of the *Bonding Space* theme, where *Contentment* is generated in positive relational exchanges, may be construed as illuminating the significance of the closeness dimension in adult attachment. It suggests that there is more to the adult attachment system than activation of proximity seeking in times of distress. The emotional bond would seem, therefore, to be more than a secure base and felt sense of security. It has an allure of its own that calls even in the absence of distress. Consequently, through the medium of the emotional bond, adult attachment can be construed as a goal in itself, not merely a source of resilience and repair.

The description of *Contentment* as a place of comfortable well-being and fulfillment makes the emotional bond of attachment a place of arrival rather than one of departure.

Bowlby (1988, p. 11) used a military metaphor to explain the attachment system, referring to the secure base as that location from which soldiers venture forth to confront the challenges of the world, and to which they return to recover before resuming battle. The phenomenological description of the emotional bond in the *Contentment* theme suggests that attachment may itself be the target of our exploration and venturing forth. In this regard it becomes the place of rejuvenation and empowerment, as well as the ultimate goal of our exploration. In this sense arriving in the emotional bond is as important as having the emotional bond that supports our exploration. Hence, the gesture of proximity seeking in adult attachment could have two meanings or intentions. In the first a condition resembling the *Sense of Security* would be sought out at times of distress, consistent with the view typically portrayed in attachment theory. In the second condition the emotional bond represented in the experience of *Contentment* is sought through psychological proximity seeking in the service of a generative state of well-being found by joining with another.

The thematic structure of the emotional bond is largely uninformative regarding the specific details of attachment styles and working models. Although the *Presence* theme alludes to a sustained representation of the *Contentment* theme, the lived experience of specific mental models related to attachment styles did not emerge. Nonetheless, it is useful to observe that various hypothetical dimensions of attachment styles and working models were illuminated in the phenomenological structure obtained. The experience of a positive and autonomous sense of self associated with secure attachment does emerge significantly in the *Contentment* and *Hardiness* themes. Similarly, the securely attached conditions of comfort with closeness, and positive model of other are explicit features of the *Contentment* theme, and inherent in the *Joining* conditions, found in the *Being-Known*, *Consensus*, *Companionship*, *Sense of Security*, and *Emotional Opening* themes. Comfort with mutual dependence is clearly established in the *Sense of Security* theme, and to some extent implicit in other aspects of the higher order theme of *Joining*.

The anxiety dimension (Collins & Read, 1990) warrants particular attention. In the phenomenological description of the established emotional bond anxiety about abandonment is essentially mitigated. A semblance of such anxiety is inherent in the lingering sense of absence contained in the *Presence* theme where the possibility that the emotional bond could deteriorate emerges; however, the description of this theme hardly conveys the substance of anxiety about abandonment. Rather, it could be considered more indicative of an unavoidable existential aspect of being-in-the-world, an awareness of which would be more easily endured in the hold of *Contentment* and sustained by the condition of *Hardiness*.

Perhaps of greater significance to attachment theory is to note that in obtaining the emotional bond anxiety about abandonment is not only mitigated, but that a more generative condition of *Contentment* takes its place. Not only is the secure attachment condition of low anxiety established, but also a virtually opposite condition of ease and relief emerges. It is as though security of attachment experienced as the emotional bond continues past the zero point on an anxiety continuum to the complete opposite point of relaxed and peaceful well-being where abandonment concerns become irrelevant. Once again consideration may be given to refining attachment theory to integrate the notion that not only is anxiety about abandonment mitigated in secure attachment, but that a more generative condition of *Contentment* fills the space that it could otherwise inhabit.

On the other side of the ledger dimensions of insecure attachment are not very clearly reflected in the higher order theme of *Surviving the Journey*. Although the experience of the *Struggle to Bond* and *Subverting Self* may reflect an underlying discomfort with closeness, the description of these themes does not permit a direct inference in this regard. The *Emotional Closing* theme most closely resembles the deactivation of the attachment system. It is also suggestive of the avoidance dimension; however, it does not explicitly describe experiences of discomfort with closeness or difficulty trusting others. It is perhaps notable that little in the higher order theme of *Surviving the Journey* suggests that the experience of anxiety about abandonment constituted a challenge in establishing and maintaining an emotional bond. On the whole, the experiences of men in this sample did not reflect particular concern about relational abandonment, although one participant did allude to such a condition early in a relationship. With this in mind, reconciling anxiety about abandonment may yet prove to be a component of the *Maturity* theme.

Reflection on the phenomenological analysis of the emotional bond generates a perspective on attachment dynamics that may inform a different organization of attachment dynamics than extant theory would suggest. On its own the current analysis does not lead us to the inference of fixed attachment styles. In conjunction with the comparative absence of experiences pertaining to discrete attachment styles the phenomenological structure obtained suggests a more holistic understanding of attachment that integrates all or many of the principles of attachment in the unfolding of a man's relationality. The thematic structure suggests the existence of a process that spans what is commonly thought of as insecure attachment implicit in *Surviving the Journey*, moving toward establishment of conditions conducive to secure attachment in *Joining*, and the establishment of the emotional bond in *Settling In*.

Although it cannot be established with certainty from the current results, there is an implication that attainment of the emotional bond has an evolving aspect that seems to follow the sequence of *Surviving the Journey*, *Joining*, and *Settling In*. The experience of the emotional bond may also unfold in a simultaneous form with recursive activation of various aspects of the three higher order themes across the span of a man's relational history. Hence, attachment may be more of a fluid and dynamic process than implied in the constraining structures of styles and dimensions. Although attachment representations may well be established in working models and expressed in attachment styles, the actual course of attachment dynamics may involve a more integrated simultaneous and sequential process as the relational domain is effectively or ineffectively negotiated. This is moderately consistent with the conceptualization of attachment styles as malleable and varying according to relationship conditions and specific contexts (Davila, Karney, & Bradbury, 1999; Simpson, Rholes, Orina, & Grich, 2002). From the view generated by phenomenological analysis of the emotional bond, refinement of adult attachment theory should perhaps be predicated on the unfolding nature of secure attachment at the individual level of analysis. The predominant protocol of aggregate across-persons analysis of quantitative research may well limit our understanding of attachment through forced categorization according to attachment style.

Applying Emotional Bond

The phenomenological structure of the emotional bond provided a foundation for considering refinements to our understanding of masculine relationality and attachment theory. Assuming that the direction that these refinements in understanding point to are validated with further research, it is useful to consider the practical applications that could emerge from the experience of emotional bond outlined in the present study.

From an educational perspective the thematic structure obtained could be useful in terms of formal or informal socialization regarding masculine relationality. Generally speaking it may be prudent to generate a more active and public dialogue concerning the nature and revision of masculine relationality. A curriculum for discussion of relational masculinity could be organized around the themes illuminated in the present study. A dialogue that emphasizes pursuit of an emotional bond articulated in terms of the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining* - that is distinct from the usual commentary about love and romance - could provide a useful framework in this regard. Men, and perhaps women, may well better negotiate relationships when the domain and objective of masculine relationality are more clearly specified. Certainly I have some confidence in speculating that many of the men who participated in this study would have appreciated having a map of their own relational territory, as well the more clear and personally relevant relational destination outlined by *Settling In* and *Joining*.

It seems particularly important to promote reflection and dialogue concerning the significance of pursuing a relational objective for men that resembles the *Contentment* theme. Elaborating on the phenomenological structure by specifying the accompanying experiences of *Presence*, *Hardiness*, and *Bonding Space*, may make it easier for men to negotiate this relational domain. Similarly, specifying the conditions in which the emotional bond unfolds as described in the higher order theme of *Joining* could provide a more concrete map to guide the relational journey. Under the umbrella of the higher order theme of *Surviving the Journey* it is arguable that the *Struggle to Bond* is already well address in psychoeducational and therapeutic formats. Countless popular books and media programs focus extensively on this domain, albeit to the relative neglect of what may be the more significant relational aspects inherent in *Settling In* and *Joining*. Although social dialogue concerning the experiences of *Subverting Self* and *Emotional Closing* could be fruitful in enhancing men's negotiation of the relational world, these are likely better addressed in a therapeutic format.

As in the aforementioned educational initiative, relational therapy for men that is informed by the phenomenological structure of *Settling In*, *Joining*, and *Surviving the Journey* could be very fruitful. Therapy that is guided by the goal of *Contentment* and the conditions of *Joining* could generate resourcefulness that empowers men to circumvent barriers to the emotional bond and successful relationality inherent in *Surviving the Journey*. Hence, a generative therapy of this sort needs first to inform men about the potential destination of their relational journey in arriving at the experience of *Contentment*. Secondly, if they are so inclined therapy then needs to engage men in developing a relational orientation characteristic of the *Maturity* theme that acknowledges the significance of the emotional bond and satisfying relational conditions. Outlining and guiding them through the conditions that support arrival of the experience of *Contentment* through *Joining* would then follow.

Therapy that focuses on masculine relationality in the context of the emotional bond will not only need to generate strategies for actively obtaining both outcomes of *Settling In* and *Contentment*, but also address the barriers to the experience of *Contentment* and the conditions of *Joining*. It is perhaps an artifact of a study that focused exclusively on one side of the relational dyad, that the results seem to point toward individual therapy for certain aspects of the relational domain for men. In this regard therapy that addresses the barriers to emotional bond inherent in *Subverting Self* and *Emotional Closing* may be more suited to an individual format. These two aspects of *Surviving the Journey* appear to be distinctly individual challenges that may have very little basis in specific relational dynamics, although involvement of a supportive spouse in therapy may facilitate reconciling these issues. Dyadic therapy is likely most suited to addressing conditions related to the *Struggle to Bond*. Assuming that these experiences are relevant to female spouses, couples therapy may be usefully applied to establishing the reciprocal conditions of *Sense of Security* and perhaps facilitating *Emotional Opening* and *Being-Known*, establishing *Consensus*, and emphasizing the experience of *Companionship*.

The Phenomenological Research Context

There is little comparative phenomenological research into masculine relationally or men's experience of the emotional bond; however, the study by Appleton and Bohm (2001) provides intriguing considerations. Although organized differently, in their phenomenological inquiry into the experience of "enduring marriage in mid-life" (p. 41) a number of themes contain elements similar to the thematic structure of the emotional bond obtained in the present study. As in the thematic structure of the emotional bond, in the "Best Friends" theme a sense of "comfort" is obtained (Appleton and Bohm, 2001, pp. 49). Indeed, the cited comments of one participant are remarkably similar to the Contentment theme. "We're comfortable with each other. We can say anything or think out loud without having to mince words or be protective of what you really think" (p. 49). Other descriptions and images used to illuminate the Best Friends theme echo those of

Contentment. "I think we just are happier and more comfortable. I think there's a comfort zone there. It's sort of like going to class with all your homework done." (p. 49).

In the Best Friends theme couples in mid-life "bounce ideas off of each other, get feedback, listen to each other and express interest in their spouse" (Appleton and Bohm, 2001, p. 49). This appears to be much like the relational dialogue, admiration, and acceptance aspects of *Being-Known*. As outlined in Consensus and alluding to the *Struggle to Bond*, the Best Friends theme illuminates "an acknowledgement of individual differences and of the difficulties that arise between friends" (p. 49). Moreover, *Consensus* is illuminated in the "Allies" theme where "individuals align as couples and cope with differences that exist" (p. 51). The notion of "being a team" prevails such that there is "a common purpose and spirit of cooperation" and the "competition" (p. 52) of earlier relating is relinquished. This seems to suggest not only the theme of *Consensus*, but also the conditions of *Struggle to Bond*, *Subverting Self*, and *Maturity* from the current study.

Consistent with the phenomenological structure of the emotional bond, *Companionship* emerged for couples in mid life as the "Companions" theme described as "the enjoyment of having a companion" (Appleton and Bohm, 2001, p. 54). Hence, having a companion may be significant not only for the men in the present study, but for men and women as suggested in the mid life couples study. Reminiscent of the *Struggle to Bond*, and *Subverting Self*, Appleton and Bohm observed, "that letting-go of attempts to change their spouse served to re-frame the way difference is viewed and then approached in marriage" (p. 64). Moreover, as in the current *Maturity* theme couples in mid life attribute this shift in martial relating to "maturity."

The Emotional Bond as Positive Affect

Given the prominence of the *Contentment* theme in the current study it is important to direct our discussion briefly into the realm of emotion. In this regard consideration of the emerging field of positive emotional states is informative (Berenbaum, 2002; Diener & Lucas, 2000; Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002). Of particular relevance is the emotion of contentment.

Although there is not yet a thorough scholarly foundation for this concept, contentment seems to be the emotional state most concerned with savoring and integrating experience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002). It has been defined as the positive emotional state that "prompts individuals to savor their current life circumstances and recent successes, experience 'oneness' with others and the world around them, and integrate recent events and achievements into their overall self-concept and worldview" (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001, p. 131). The emotional state of contentment is thought to emerge under conditions considered safe, predictable, demanding low effort, and in which vigilance can be suspended. This definition of contentment and the conditions in which it unfolds resonates well with many aspects of the phenomenological structure of the emotional bond obtained in the current study, especially the theme of *Contentment*.

The circumplex model of emotions (Feldman Barrett & Russel 1999; Russel & Lemay, 2000) is also relevant to the relational theme of *Contentment*. The circumplex model of emotions proposes that the domain of emotional experience can be understood by organizing such experience in a two-dimensional structure. Emotional words, facial expressions, and situations converge as categories located in a two-dimensional space formed by two independent bipolar dimensions relating to pleasure and activation. The pleasure-displeasure axis refers to the hedonic tone or value of emotional concepts, while the activation-deactivation axis refers to the "sense of mobilization or energy" (Feldman Barrett & Russell, 1999, p. 10).

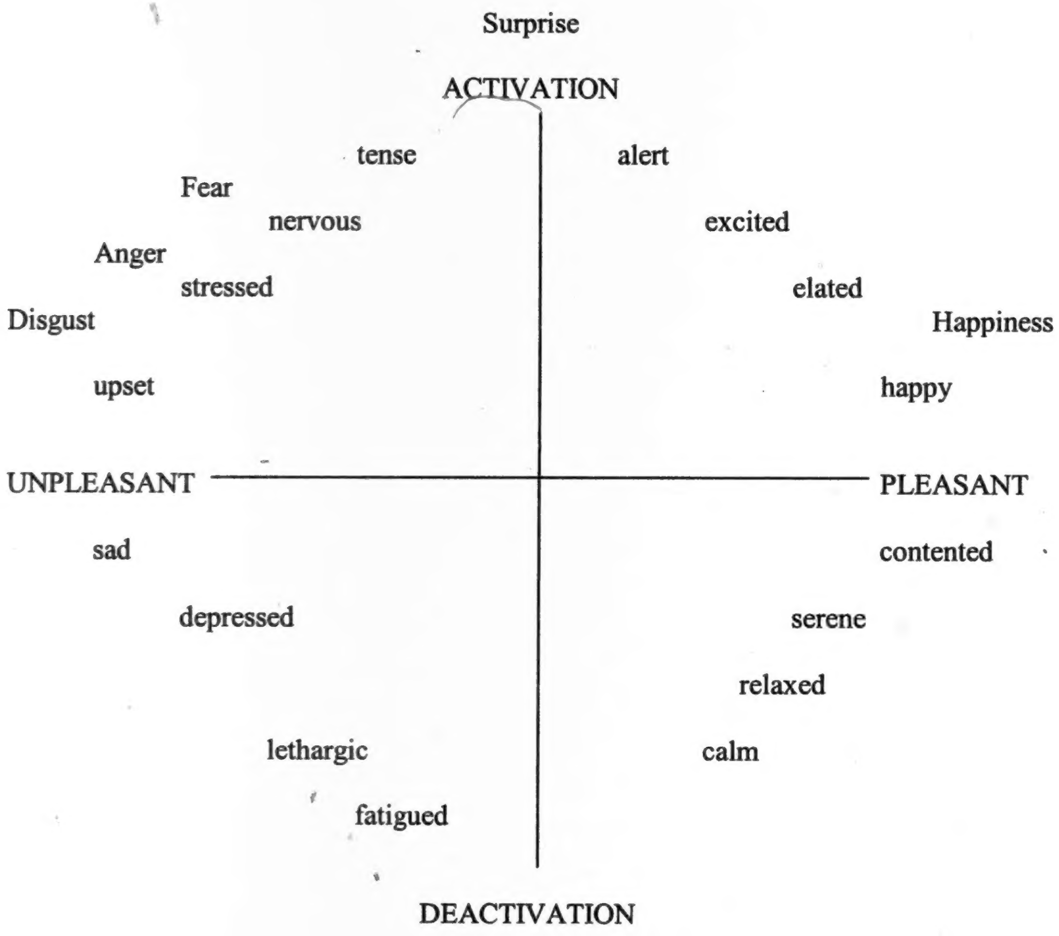

Figure 1. The Circumplex Model of Emotion Adapted from Feldman Barrett and Russell (1999), and Russell & Lemay (2000).

For our purposes it is notable that the lower right quadrant of the circumplex model (see figure 1.) represents the intersection of low emotional activation and high emotional value (pleasant). It is here that we find the emotional concept of contentment. Moreover, the cluster of emotional concepts located in this space (i.e. calm, relaxed, serene, and contented) corresponds precisely with the words used by participants to describe their experience of the emotional bond. Given this correspondence, we may be well served to consider that men's experience of the emotional bond is something that shares common ground with the positive emotion of contentment and reflects the condition of low emotional activation combined with positive emotional value.

The relational theme of *Contentment* reflects a more elaborate experience than outlined in the definition of the emotional state of contentment; however, the latter affords us an opportunity to reflect further on the possible nature of the emotional bond. Although the condition of savoring experience was not specifically revealed in the phenomenological analysis undertaken, on further reflection there are overt and subtle indications that the emotional bond experienced by participants included a semblance of savoring that extended for some to the experience of oneness with their partner. This is especially true of the *Contentment* theme that would seem to invite no other response than to savor the experience. Indeed, much of what participants outlined in the *Contentment* theme in terms of fulfillment, experiential enrichment, emotional freeing, and allure is suggestive of savoring a positive emotional state. In turn the *Bonding Space* theme speaks essentially to savoring of the relational connection. Turning to the higher order theme of *Joining*, it would seem that for the *Companionship* theme to be relevant it too would require some form of savoring. Moreover, one wonders whether the *Sense of*

Security theme would have significance for participants if it were not savored, or whether we would have the theme of *Emotional Opening* without a state of savoring.

There are also indications that the experience of the emotional bond may have involved a good deal of the integration cited in the definition of the emotion of contentment. Integration of self and other, as well as a relational self seems well established throughout the *Contentment* theme, most prominently in the aspects of fulfillment, authenticity, and emotional freeing. Much of the higher order theme of *Joining* also suggests a process of integration. The experience of *Being-Known*, especially in the aspects of relational dialogue, acceptance and deepening, admiration, insight, difference, and sharing growth suggests a process of integration that may be established via the relational or emotional state of contentment. Similarly, reconciling the common ground of *Consensus* and inhabiting the realm of *Companionship* would seem to require integration that may unfold in moments when contentment is activated.

Perhaps understandably the positive emotion of contentment seems much less relevant to the higher order theme of *Surviving the Journey*. Effectively the *Struggle to Bond*, *Subverting Self*, and *Disengaged Closing* reflect the diametrically opposite condition of negative emotional states that appear to create barriers to the emotional bond. It is useful at this point to note that positive emotional states "broaden people's momentary thought-action repertoires, widening the array of the thoughts and actions that come to mind" (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002, p.320). Hence, emotional self-regulation, flexible and creative thinking, and effective problem-solving are enhanced in positive emotional states. It is possible that this source of resilience is compromised when men are embroiled in the challenge of *Surviving the Journey* where the benefit of positive emotional states is less frequently obtained. By contrast, in the *Hardiness* theme that accompanied the relational experience of *Contentment*, participants described a strong confidence in their ability to negotiate the challenges of life and relating. Thus, in the *Hardiness* theme we are perhaps witnessing the empowering "broaden-and-build" effect that accrues from the positive emotional state corresponding to relational or emotional contentment (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2002, p.320).

It is also notable that there is a "relative lack of differentiation among the positive emotions" (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2001, p. 124), which makes self-reporting of positive emotional experience challenging. Difficulty discriminating positive emotional states, in conjunction with the low emotional activation of relational and emotional contentment, could easily make it difficult for some men to recognize or comment on the positive emotional aspects of relationality. It is, therefore, not surprising that participants reported and displayed difficulty describing their experience of the emotional bond. With this in mind we may better understand the *Maturity* theme as at least partially symptomatic of difficulty discriminating positive affective states marked by low activation.

Under this condition the significance of relational or emotional contentment may easily pass unnoticed, especially in the context of socialization that does not inform men of the relevance of this subtle emotional state. Understandably, some men may then wander the relational domain without adequate direction until stumbling on the insight concerning the significance of relationality found in the *Maturity* theme. One wonders whether resolution of the *Maturity* theme would be expedited if men were better informed about the nature, significance, and perhaps the goal of relational or emotional contentment. Finally, if we can indeed conclude that the nature of masculine relationality is distinguished by the vagueness and subtlety imposed by low activation positive emotional states such as contentment, the stereotypical view of men as affectively and relationally restrained could easily follow, albeit mistakenly. Based on the emerging texture of masculine relationality as involving low activation positive affect, the search for intense positive emotion in the relational lives of men may be misguided; however, this is not to suggest that men are either emotionally or relationally deficient.

In summary, investigation of the masculine emotional bond and relationality as a low activation positive affect may be a particularly fruitful endeavor that resonates with the results of the present inquiry. Continued inquiry into the emotion of contentment, with special emphasis on the concept of savoring, in conjunction with the more vague notion of integration, could broaden our understanding of a distinct masculine relationality founded in the emotional bond. As always ongoing research would need to establish whether or not the positive emotional states experienced in feminine relationality are anymore distinct than the low activation relationality apparent for men in this study. Moreover, it would be necessary to determine whether a different form of questioning would illuminate more intense and discernable positive affective states in masculine relationality and emotional bonding.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

It is perhaps all too obvious that the investigation undertaken is limited in several respects. Although the phenomenological method used inquired relatively deeply and personally into the lives of participants and richly illuminated their lived experience, we cannot infer that the thematic structure obtained would generalize to the population at large. The obtained convenience sample was self-selecting and could not be considered in any manner representative of men. Compared to previous studies the age range specified for this sample constitutes a strength of this study; however, it imposed a limitation to the extent that the experiences of younger and less educated men were not sampled. In this regard continued phenomenological study of different samples of men, as well as quantitative study that investigates the prevalence of the illuminated themes would better inform the nature of the emotional bond in masculine relationality.

The current inquiry was effectively uninformative regarding feminine relationality, especially regarding the emotional bond. Additional research that investigates women's experience of the emotional would add an equally useful aspect to our understanding of relationality and perhaps to attachment theory. Indeed, in the absence of a gender comparison we cannot determine with any confidence that the obtained results necessarily reflect a distinct masculine condition. Understanding of the relational domain for both men and women would certainly benefit from phenomenological study that inquired into the experience of emotional bond for both parties in a marriage. In addition it may be useful to investigate the extent to which the description of the emotional bond experienced in adulthood can illuminate the significance and process of secure attachment in children.

Finally, the results of this study are generally uninformative regarding the role of other aspects of masculinity on relationality or the experience of emotional bond. A proper consideration of relational masculinity should more specifically investigate the impact of various dimensions of gender role identity on the relational domain. Similarly, given the apparent persistence of masculine stereotyping according to principles of agency and hegemony, additional research that clarifies the extent to which they can be generalized across contexts would be valuable. The current research findings suggest that if agentic and hegemonic attributes are displayed in other contexts such as work, sports, business, etc., they may not apply in the relational domain to the extent that stereotyping would imply. Our understanding of masculinity would, therefore, be better served by research that specifies just where stereotypical attributes actually are demonstrated in the lives of men.

Considering Relational Masculinity and Attachment

"What is it with men anyway?" Given the limitations of the study undertaken we cannot in the end answer this question with much authority. Nonetheless, explication of men's experience of the emotional bond using phenomenological methodology has arguably provided some initial direction in broadening and clarifying the psychology of men and of men in relationship. When asked in the proper fashion relational masculinity does seem to reveal itself quite readily. Based on the results of the current inquiry it is perhaps insulting to men to once again confirm the obvious - that masculinity is firmly embedded in the domain of relationality. With the perspective of the thematic structure obtained, the lives of those men who participated were indeed imbued with a distinct relational and affective tone. At least among this sample, men appear quite capable of contacting a significant and empowering state of well-being in the throws of an emotional bond with their mate. Hence, *Contentment* may light the way in the relational journey of men. This condition alone is an exciting prospect that defines masculinity in a more meaningful, affective, and enlivening fashion. Illumination of the experience of *Contentment* and the supporting cast contained in the higher order theme of *Joining* presents men with another way of being-in-the-world that relieves them of the relentless striving that the masculine stereotype implies. Certainly it suggests that men have the freedom to chart a life course that is completely different than that defined by either agentic or hegemonic masculinity.

Results of the present study have also illuminated the significance of the emotional bond in adult attachment. With the thematic structure obtained, the notion of an emotional or affective bond in adult attachment becomes much more than one of many terms found in the lexicon of attachment principles, some of which are poorly elaborated. Certainly the phenomenon of the emotional bond acquires substantially more meaning in this inquiry than is typically contained in commentary about attachment. To this end the notion of an emotional bond should perhaps take a more central role in attachment theory and research. Moreover, consideration of different aspects of the obtained thematic structure generated several compelling prospects for revising attachment theory.

Expanding the research agenda regarding relational masculinity, and adult attachment to incorporate phenomenological methodology has arguably been fruitful in the present context. Positioning research from a different perspective such as that obtained in phenomenological inquiry provides a means by which important psychological and relational matters can be more fully understood. A research agenda that incorporates different-ways-of-knowing obtained by using both qualitative and quantitative methods will surely more clearly illuminate the different-ways-of-being inherent in plural masculinities and femininities.

Conclusion

To summarize, the results of the present study most prominently outline a relational experience of emotional closeness reflecting low activation positive affect that promotes a comfortable sense of well-being and peace of mind (*Contentment*). This relational contentment is accompanied by a sense of relief and completion, where striving is relinquished and a more profound sense of emotional and experiential attunement is possible. At the same time an experience of personal authenticity is activated that allows the uncensored sense of self to emerge, in concert with a compelling sense of self-assurance that being-in-the-world and relationality are manageable (*Hardiness*).

The obtained findings would also suggest that the emotional bond, and perhaps relationality in general, may be composed of and/or constituted in a synthesis of relational conditions contained in the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining*. Consequently, in order for men to establish and maintain an emotional bond in adult heterosexual relationships it may be necessary for specific conditions or experiences to be in place. These may include the experience of relational contentment (*Contentment*), recurrent experiences of discrete relational and emotional engagement (*Bonding Space*), the reciprocal condition of being well known and accepted (*Being-Known*), establishment of a common ground of relating (*Consensus*), the experience of sharing the lived world with a special partner (*Companionship*), reciprocal exchange of emotional support (*Sense of Security*), and surpassing the emotional vulnerability of intimacy (*Emotional Opening*). Finally, it is not particularly novel to have found that there can be barriers to establishing and maintaining an emotional bond or more generally relationships. Nonetheless, it may prove to be an important finding that these barriers are more easily negotiated when men achieve what may be a developmental stage in relationality, acquired by obtaining insight into the nature, goals, and significance of relationality, as well as the skills to effectively negotiate that domain (i.e. *Maturity*).

Ultimately the significance of these findings hinges on the generality of relational contentment and the associated experiences that seem to form the emotional bond. Consequently, future research should investigate the extent to which the thematic structure of *Settling In* and *Joining* are prominent or significant in the relational lives of men and women, established using larger sampling across a range of ages, education, and socioeconomic status.

It is also important to investigate the relationships between the sub-themes that compose *Settling In* and *Joining*. Although it may be an artifact of the research method, an impression was obtained that in the emotional bond relational contentment may hold a more significant position over other aspects of the thematic structure contained in *Settling In* and *Joining*. The *Joining* sub-themes seemed to play a supportive role in the development of relational contentment and by extension the emotional bond; however, the presence and direction of such influence was not clearly established in the present study. It is also possible that the emotional bond unfolds from the combined effect of the experiences contained in the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining*, in which relational contentment would be but one of several contributing conditions. Nonetheless, it cannot be determined from the present results what the necessary and sufficient conditions would need to be to form and maintain an emotional bond. It cannot be confidently stated whether the quality and strength of the emotional bond would be particularly compromised by the removal of one or more of the experiences contained in the thematic structure of *Settling In* and *Joining*. Moreover, we are not able to determine what quantity of any one or all of the experiences contained in *Settling In* and *Joining* would be needed to establish an emotional bond.

Thus, in future research it may be useful to establish the preeminent or equivalent status of the conditions contained in the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining*, especially concerning relational contentment. Such research would need to investigate the significance and direction of influence that the various sub-themes may have on the emotional bond, and perhaps on each other. Ongoing research would need to ascertain the necessary and sufficient experiential conditions for establishing an emotional bond, as well as the role that frequency or intensity of these experiences may play in this matter.

Of course the foregoing begs the question of whether results of the present study actually reflect the emotional bond. It cannot be said with any certainty that what has been tapped is the emotional bond founded in attachment. Moreover, it is unclear how relational contentment is in itself sufficient to bond a man to his wife. Assuming that relational contentment does indeed play a key and critical role in the emotional bond, it seems remarkable that this low activation positive affect would be sufficient to create the intensity of bonding that holds relationships together and activates grief reactions when loss occurs. It is difficult to reconcile how the intense emotional condition of grief associated with the loss of an attachment figure would follow from such low activation positive affect. Even if the experiences contained in the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining* contribute individually or collectively to the emotional bond, the mechanism(s) through which this occurs remains a mystery. Our understanding of the emotional bond would not be complete without identifying the process by which the experiences contained in *Settling In* and *Joining* transform into a strong emotional bond, the latent intensity of which is reflected in grief reactions.

It would be useful, therefore, for future research to study the possible relationships between key concepts from attachment theory (i.e. insecure versus secure attachment styles, working models, etc.), and relational contentment and/or the broader conditions contained in the higher order themes of *Settling In* and *Joining*. Establishing correspondence between variables from attachment and the sub-themes from *Settling In* and *Joining* may enhance confidence that the key results of this study do indeed reflect the emotional bond of attachment theory. Future research that outlines how the emotional bond forms out of the low activation positive affect of relational contentment, and/or the aggregate of experiences from *Settling In* and *Joining* will undoubtedly help complete our understanding of the emotional bond. Finally, research that investigates the prevalence and significance of a developmental stage reminiscent of relational maturity should enhance our understanding of the emotional bond in the context of relational masculinity.

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Appendix One

Sampling Circular

MEN IN HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

Are you male, over 30 years of age, and in a close relationship?

Do you know someone who is?

Participants are required to volunteer for a study of men's experience of close relationship.

Your assistance is sought to help expand our understanding of men in relationship and their experience of emotional connection. Your contribution can assist in illuminating the psychology of men, gender differences in relationships, and ways of obtaining relationship satisfaction.

Your participation will involve an informal interview of less than two hours, and a brief follow-up.

To Participate Please contact

Ken Harrison, M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta

(780) 483-8522

This study has the approval of the Faculties of Education and Extension Research Ethics Board.

Appendix Two

Consent & Information Form

INQUIRY INTO MEN'S EXPERIENCE OF EMOTIONAL CONNECTION:

A RESEARCH PROGRAM

Kenneth B. Harrison M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate
Telephone 483-8522
Email: kbh@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca

Under the Supervision of
Dr. L. Stewin
Department of Educational Psychology
University of Alberta
Telephone 492-2389

OBJECTIVE & ACTIVITIES

The following interview is part of a research project designed to investigate men's experience of emotional connection in their primary relationships with women. It is my hope that you will participate by describing experiences of emotional connection or disconnection with your intimate partner. The interview will be approached in a relaxed fashion in which you describe your experiences. I will participate by occasionally asking for clarification or prompting for additional experiences. This interview will take an hour to an hour and a half.

An analysis will be conducted of the interview. I would then like to arrange a follow-up contact to obtain your feedback on the analysis and possibly seek additional information. This may take half an hour to an hour. If you wish a copy of the transcript and analysis will be provided.

It is hoped that your involvement in this study will assist in understanding the psychology of men in relationship and gender differences in relationships. Improved understanding in this domain will assist psychologists and community services in more effectively promoting psychological and physical health in men, as well as healthy marital and family relationships.

Please feel free to ask questions regarding any aspect of the study and your involvement before we begin or at any time thereafter.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All possible efforts will be taken to keep your involvement in this project confidential. The primary researcher, Ken Harrison, will be the only contact person during your involvement, and the only party knowing your identity. Your name, telephone number, and address will be kept in a locked, secure location, only accessible to him. If someone else has informed you about this study, they will not be advised of your participation or nonparticipation.

With your consent the interview will be audio taped. The audiotape will then be transcribed to written text and edited to remove identifying features (i.e. name, occupation, family composition, personal history, race, culture, etc.) to ensure your anonymity. The audiotape will then be erased. In order to communicate information important to the study findings and conclusions, some personal information may be used in a fictionalized manner that maintains anonymity. The results of the study will be published as a dissertation that will be available to the public. Anonymity and confidentiality will be retained in that document.

If you have concerns about protecting your identity, please feel free to discuss this with me.

CONSENT

This is strictly a research study. No other service, benefit, or use is intended or implied. The primary researcher is Ken Harrison. Dr. Len Stewin, Professor in the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta, is supervising.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your permission is requested to audiotape the interview. You are under no obligation to participate, and may withdraw at any time you wish. A decision to withdraw consent may be communicated by informing Ken Harrison verbally or in writing. If desired, a decision to withdraw consent may be directed to Dr. Stewin.

Your decision to participate should be free of pressure from other persons to volunteer. Please feel free to discuss any such pressures with me and/or to decline involvement if they are present. Your decision should also be with the knowledge that the results of this study will be published (with your anonymity maintained) in a format available to the public, may be quoted in other publications, and may be described in public presentations. You should also be aware that the exercise of talking about emotional experiences in relationship may provoke distress for some people. The researcher is sensitive to this and is prepared to suspend activity or involvement. In the event that distress is problematic, you will be directed to services that may assist you in this regard. It is possible that the exercise of talking about emotional experiences in relationship would promote insight or experiences that enhance your well-being and relationships.

You are encouraged to take the time to reflect privately on you willingness to volunteer.

DECLARATION

I, Kenneth B. Harrison, as researcher, agree to abide by the confidentiality conditions described above.

Dated at ______________ this _______ day of _______________ 2002.

Signature ____

I, _______________________________________, consent to participate in this study. I understand what my participation will involve, and that I may withdraw my consent at any time.

Dated at ______________ this _______ day of _______________ 2002.

Signature ____

Appendix Three

Interview Script

Preamble:

I would like to ask you about your experiences in close relationships. At first the question may seem somewhat vague. This is an intentional attempt to allow your experience to emerge on its own as authentically as possible. In any case I will help guide you through the process. I'm sure that you will pretty quickly and easily get a sense of the task. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to stop the interview please feel free to let me know at any point. Would you like to continue?

I am most interested in learning about how you experience certain aspects of your relationship. You may have your own ideas or beliefs about how relationships occur. At this point I hope you will set those aside and focus on the experience itself. I would be interested in discussing your ideas about relationships afterward.

Relationships are often characterized as affectionate: that somehow or other there is an important emotion or feeling quality in the relationship. Some people speak of this in terms of an emotional bond or emotional connection or emotional closeness.

The Question:

I would like you to talk about or describe your experience of emotional connection or emotional closeness in your primary relationship or relationships with women. Specifically, I would like you to describe experiences when you had or felt something like emotional connection or emotional closeness. Can you recall and tell me about some times when you felt emotionally connected or emotionally close?

Please tell me about this experience of emotional connection or emotional closeness as if you were living it at the time. What was it like?

It might be helpful to describe the situation. What was going on at the time? Who was there? How did it go?

As a contrast I would also like you to reflect on and tell me about specific times/experiences that you may have had when the emotional connection or emotional closeness was not there for you. Is it always there? Does it vary? Are there times that stand out when the emotional connection or emotional closeness was gone?

Additional Probes:

What is it like to feel/be emotionally connected or emotionally close?

What do you notice in yourself and around you when you have had this experience of emotional connection or emotional closeness?

What thoughts do you have or what were you saying to yourself when you felt emotionally connected or emotionally close?

What feelings or physical sensations did you notice when you felt emotionally connected or emotionally close?

If Concrete Content Regarding Emotional Connection/Closeness is Weak Ask:

I would also like to ask if you have had the experience of someone being there fore you. Does that sound at all familiar to you? Can you recall some times when you experienced someone being there fore you?

Are you aware of times when it seemed like she was not there fore you? Can you describe that experience?

Appendix Four

Goodness of Fit Package

What I have here is an attempt to describe the basic form of the experience of the emotional bond (i.e. closeness or connection) in relationships, as experienced by men across their adult life. For some it was experienced over the course of a single marriage, for others across several relationships. The analysis of interviews illuminated a structure of experience organized into three thematic categories: 1) Settling In, 2) Joining, and 3) Surviving the Journey. These are sketched out in brief below, and then elaborated on the following pages.

I would like you to consider whether or not these themes correspond to your experience of the emotional bond. Obviously some aspects may not be relevant or as significant at the present time, but if they have been it is useful for me to know. Basically, what fits and what doesn't? It is entirely possible that nothing fits. If so that's OK.

Settling In describes the experience of emotional bond. It is composed of five themes:

- Comfort-Contentment
- Temporal Presence
- Hardiness
- Bonding Space
- The Lingering Sense of Absence

Joining elaborates on the experience of emotional bond and describes the conditions under which it unfolds. It is composed of five themes:

- Being-Known
- Consensus
- Companionship
- Sense of Security
- Emotional Opening

Surviving the Journey describes challenges that are confronted in establishing and maintaining emotional bond. It is composed of four themes.

- Struggle to Bond
- Maturity-Experience
- Subverting Self
- Disengaged Closing

SETTLING IN

Comfort-Contentment

In the presence of emotional bond men obtain a sense of arrival in a place of comfortable well-being and fulfillment that also enlivens and enriches life. There is a blend of simple calming with the more exciting and energizing flavour of joyful enthusiasm that remains contained in the mantle of peaceful serenity.

A sigh of relief conveys the impression of completion where the pressures of being-in-the-world fade. Striving is relinquished. You can rest and relax. The worries of the world dissipate and the comfortable ease of authentic being establishes. The need to "censor" who you are is suspended and you can "really open up." A more whole and positive sense of self emerges in the shadow of feeling that you are important to someone.

With the perspective that "all is right with your world," the significance of the relational domain is illuminated. There is "a feeling of peace" and "comfortable being with" your partner. The durability of the bond feels assured. An effortless harmony of being "at one" with her unfolds, where self-other boundaries blur. As the pressures of relating and being dissipate, synchronicity emerges where "everything just kind of flows."

There is a sense of homecoming as though completing an arduous journey in search of this very condition. The experience of arrival in this "right place" underscores the significance of unrivaled and indisputable certainty of "belonging" with her. Once obtained, the condition of Comfort-Contentment is consuming and alluring. It holds you in its grasp and engenders a thirst for more. You want to be at-home with her, "you want to be there." It demands a permanence that you are reluctant to relinquish.

Temporal Presence in Emotional Bond

Comfort-Contentment is experienced as a richly endowed momentary phenomenon and/or a subtle continuous affair lingering on the edge of awareness. There is a sustained everyday presence of Comfort-Contentment in emotional bond with few occasions where it is not "flowing well." Thus the emotional bond is experienced as a subtle ever present and superseding feeling that is "definitely always there." Concurrently it consists of and is maintained by the occurrence of more intense episodes of memorable and consuming Comfort-Contentment.

Hardiness

In the hold of Comfort-Contentment self-assurance emerges that establishes Hardiness in negotiating the challenges of the world. With the foundation of Comfort-Contentment in place and the weight of being-in-the-world lifted, a remarkable yet simple empowerment emerges in the feeling "that you can conquer anything." The task of being-in-the-world is made manageable and you can handle "the game of life."

The Bonding Space

The experience of Comfort-Contentment is obtained in special places, events, and gestures. These are discrete occasions that are sometimes distinguished in their simplicity. It is found in the little things like the reflected gaze in moments of shared joy, where "you don't have to say anything." It involves simple touching, smiling, and shared contentment – "just hanging out and holding hands." Comfort-Contentment is nurtured in the special bonding dialogue about "us" during private time together. It unfolds in the backdrop of shared "quiet peacefulness" of "beautiful surroundings," in special moments with children, as well as the shared experience of trauma and loss.

The Bonding Space is found inadvertently in the course of everyday affairs; however, it has an elusive nature in the relational world of men. Arrival in the Bonding Space is a treasured moment that for some men is increasingly rare as the demands of active living and family consume life.

The Lingering Sense of Absence

In the presence of Comfort-Contentment there is a contrasting effect where the experience of bond absence can be entertained. It is as though you cannot know one without the other. Even in the hold of Comfort-Contentment knowledge of its potential loss is not far removed. Remembrance of the foregoing struggle to bond seems to add to the sense of relief and the certainty that this is the preferred domain. The backdrop of emotional discomfort and distress in the absence of emotional bond informs the significance and nature of well-formed emotional bond contained in Comfort-Contentment.

JOINING

Being-Known

In the accomplishment of emotional bond men experience being known by and knowing another more thoroughly than anyone else. An opening of selves occurs that surpasses the superficiality of everyday relating and adds substance to the emotional bond. Being-Known unfolds most richly in the uninhibited sharing and exploring of the more vulnerable aspects of self. Our essential being is revealed in the retrieval and sharing of our deeper personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences. There is a sense of freedom to discuss virtually everything about yourself, and little that she does not know about you.

A pleasurable and joyful well-being emerges in the acceptance and validation obtained in the exercise of thoroughly Being-Known by another. Affirmation of self as good enough is acquired in the revealing, understanding, and acceptance of where you come from, who you have been in the past, and who you are now. The sense of self is enriched in the knowledge that she endeavours to know and understand you, and takes pleasure in the breadth of who you are.

The familiarity of Being-Known has an unspoken aspect where you don't always have to say who you are. Undeclared internal distress is recognized and understood by her expression of voiced concern or silent embrace. The depth of Being-Known extends to accurate insights she offers when your own self-reflection and insight is insufficient.

Being-Known is a reciprocal condition where understanding, appreciating, admiring, and accepting her also has a place. There is an enduring interest in and focus on your partner. You come to know what is "in her heart." You understand "what they've had to overcome to be who they are." The exchange of Being-Known allows you to side step areas of sensitivity and avoid harming one-another. As Being-Known establishes there is an effortless reciprocal anticipation of thoughts, actions, and comments.

Consensus

The emotional bond forms in the harmony of common ground, reflected in the simple "partnership" of self and other. Here a resonance of self and other unfolds in the comfortable, energizing, and joyful experience of similarity. With "so much in common" the emotional bond solidifies in a relational frame of mind that embraces the experience of shared-being.

Consensus is experienced as a simple and satisfying presence of harmony as "things fall into place." It is the sense of well-being and the joyful enthusiasm drawn from simply being "good together" across domains of interest and responsibilities. It also emerges as an affectively unremarkable and practical affair that is expressed in the smooth flow of shared activity and responsibility in relating and everyday affairs.

The common ground of shared-being is fertilized by reciprocal influence. Differences do exist, but become part of the complex texture of shared-being. Similarity and difference form a recursive dynamic that "feed off of each other" in a manner that accomplishes a sense of Consensus. Consensus entails discovery of ground for shared experience that accrues from her influence, as well as the pleasure and excitement of her joining in your ways of being.

Consensus grows from extended spoken exchanges surrounding important shared plans or experiences. Indeed, a good deal of Consensus resides in planning dialogue about a shared path of being together. Dialogue about "the plan" solidifies emotional bond in the arousal of excitement and pleasure regarding the anticipated shared experience of a continuing future together.

In the theme of Consensus a prevailing synchronicity is established variously in the good fit of shared background, culture, circumstances, temperament, goals, interests, activities, perceptions, values, attitudes, and basis of attraction. Sameness in thought, feeling, interests and plans is established. Consensus also encompasses both positive and negative experience. Joy and sadness, good and bad are shared.

Companionship

The experience of emotional bond involves a comfortable well-being found in the company of another who enriches existence by sharing the lived-world with you. It is the reassurance of knowing "that you have one good friend" – that there is one other special person in the world who will join you in the experience of life. As a companionate alliance the emotional bond provides relief from isolation. Simply put, "it feels better than being alone." In the absence of Companionship the richness of experience is diminished, life feels empty and sad; however, it is not so much a need as something that completes the emotional bond.

The theme of Companionship spans the realm of ordinary affairs, special joyful events, and strife. It is having someone to share treasured moments and accomplishments, as well as the enduring the trials of living. The theme of Companionship is illuminated in the simple joy of togetherness displayed variously in touch, dialogue, exchange of gaze, and activity. It is the pleasure of being engaged in the exercise of sharing experience and interests, a pleasure that you can sustain by reminiscing about special moments. In Companionship the fortified emotional bond provides a sense of security that you are not alone in negotiating the strife of being-in-the-world.

Sense of Security

In emotional bond "a sense of security" emerges in the presence of a responsive partner who knows, supports, and has your best interests at heart. It is "like a safety net" of having someone there for you emotionally. The security of well-being is obtained in the shadow of a mindful other who is "there no matter what." It evolves to an effortless exchange of reciprocal support that enhances the texture of emotional bond and strengthens its hold.

Although it applies to pursuit of practical affairs, personal aspirations, and general well-being, Sense of Security emerges most prominently "in times of difficulty." In the immediacy of life challenges "knowing that the pain that you have is being shared by someone" makes "it feel more bearable." The presence of a supportive partner who helps soothe distress and generates an atmosphere of reassurance, promotes a sense of relief and closure at times of duress. It allows you to relax, and frees you to easily turn to other matters.

With the Sense of Security in place opening up and sharing emotionally is easier. There is a sense of freedom to protest and call attention to distress at times of need: to verbally discharge emotional distress. Still, the Sense of Security can unfold without speaking. A hug or a look can express the presence of distress, and the need for reassuring support. The felt Sense of Security is obtained in the sense of validation from being heard, understood, and considered important to someone. It can be a simple quiet acceptance and understanding, or the gesture of her simply standing by.

The Sense of Security is a reciprocal condition that involves having "someone to really care about." A sense of pleasure and satisfaction is obtained from the experience of throwing yourself into caring compassionately for a special other. Recognizing her distress, and being able to "help" by having a good "grasp on her "emotions" makes you significant in her life, and seems to bring you closer.

Emotional Opening

In establishing and maintaining emotional bond men confront the basic condition of opening themselves to the tender and vulnerable world of emotional closeness. As one participant observed, this entails "allowing that feeling to come in." To enter into an emotional bond it seems necessary to negotiate the risk of vulnerability. Men appear to anticipate a nebulous and unsettling experience of emotional activation as they approach the more intimate revealing of self.

Emotional Openness entails moving beyond trepidation about emotional harm, and to trust that she will be there when you step into the space of emotional bond. It means taking the risk that your partner may not reciprocate in shared openness. Nonetheless, men appear able to negotiate the barrier of vulnerability. Emotional Opening then emerges as a satisfying depth of authentic exchange that surpasses the "surfacy" condition of unfulfilling relationships. No longer guarded it is easier for men to express tender emotions. Crying is acceptable, although in the hold of emotional bond it may seem unnecessary.

In the ambiance of Emotional Opening experience is enriched, adding emotional texture and heightening everyday experience, without which life seems more vacant. You are more receptive to the immediate world, the sphere of personal emotions, and the comfort of bonding. You become more aware of the illuminating significance of her presence and emotional state, which extends to recognition of her awareness of you. In accomplishing Emotional Opening a certain reflective and emotionally expressive stance emerges that does not occur in any other relational context. It almost compels you to deal with issues that could otherwise have been dismissed. Hence, barriers to emotional bonding in everyday affairs are more easily removed.

SURVIVING THE JOURNEY

Struggle to Bond

The struggle to establish and maintain an emotional bond affects the relationships of men in some form. The emotional bond does not seem to unfold on its own accord with particular ease or speed. Men may endure a roller coaster of hits and misses as they navigate barriers in this aspect of their relational lives. Ultimately the emotional bond is itself experienced as the relative containment of disabling relational strife.

The Struggle to Bond unfolds in the relatively innocuous domain of everyday affairs. The emotional bond is all too easily neglected in the course of everyday living, as the activities of life consume opportunities for establishing and maintaining it. The Struggle to Bond surfaces in the inevitable differences between self and other. Here men confront the challenge of reconciling differences in relational and communication style, temperament, culture, commitment to work or family, pressures to change, and/or gaps in reciprocal acceptance.

Relational strife is sometimes quite severe and prolonged, where being together seems more of a "problem" than a relationship. Here it is all too easy to turn away, to withdraw. The Struggle to Bond unfolds in relational patterns of conflict, broken promises, and disappointment. Barriers are experienced in the interpersonal "dance" of reciprocal emotional hypersensitivity, criticism, invalidation, jealousy, insatiable yearning for closeness, misperception, and emotional injury. For others establishing an emotional bond is complicated by intrusions from childhood or adult relational history expressed in the form of tension, unattainable expectations, exaggerated partner imperfections, and distorted interpersonal exchanges.

Maturity-Experience

Relational maturity and experience emerged as significant. Having worked through the rigors of relational strife, and navigated a certain personal transformation where relational interests are clarified, there is an "aged feeling" to the emotional bond. The significance of the emotional bond itself is more clearly registered. With Maturity-Experience men have learned that the emotional bond is a necessary component in close relationship, without which shared-being has a barren quality.

In this theme men tire of the Struggle to Bond. The allure of simple relational harmony where "you just want an easy life" now overshadows the unclear intent of immature relating. There is a softening as you recognize personal vulnerability in the context of emotional bond. Yet paradoxically trepidation about risk of abandonment is dispelled.

With the importance of an affectionate comfortable and companionate bond established, men turn more positively and comfortably to the relational domain. Having entered the relational field unprepared - because "no one teaches you this stuff" - with age and experience skill and capacity are acquired to more effectively navigate its waters.

Subverting Self

In establishing and maintaining an emotional bond men negotiate the difficult realm of two competing worlds. With the Subverting Self theme they confront the necessary condition of suspending self-interest in the service of the emotional bond. Subverting Self involves taking perspective on the "larger scheme of things" and reconciling "that you are not the centre of the universe." In secure emotional bonds men competently navigate the terrain of competing worlds by striking a careful balance between surrendering the significance of self and asserting self-interests.

The mission of Subverting Self is formulated most prominently in the task of "being able to appreciate the other person for who they are" and extends to the understanding "that everybody has their own way of being." With this acceptance the impulse to control or change her is contained. Subverting Self means being receptive to her influence, and keeping commitments in the face of impulses to indulge self-interest. It involves competent emotional-regulation that returns you to the hold of the emotional bond following distressing experiences that have pulled you away. Subverting Self extends to a willing sacrifice in support of her interests, as well as enduring the cost of being emotionally supportive. Activation of Subverting Self involves the harmless surrendering of potentially divisive differences, of knowing when to "give in." It involves respectful indulgence that preserves dignity and emotional bond when disputes are negotiated

Disengaged Closing

This theme describes the emotional detachment of relational withdrawal. In the context of relational conflict, self-interest and adversarial posture, "walls and roadblocks" are built. In this standoff the possibility of freeing and opening dialogue, that could reconcile emotional bond, is suspended. You feel "alone" and "miserable" on your side of unspoken relating.

There is an impulse to escape from relational strife by turning inward and away. When sustained this leads to questioning "whether or not you should be married . . . whether or not she's the right one." You "don't want to be here." It is "more pleasant being apart." Feeling alone in the relationship, expectation of relational demise is cultivated, "you almost give up."

In this aspect of the Struggle to Bond "the first thing you think about is the negative right off the bat." Attention is drawn to her imperfections. Consumed by the immediacy of emotional pain, the future seems remote. There is a closing down as emotional experience and expression are restrained. Tender feelings are made "solid and locked" outside of reach.

A sense of purposefulness permeates this theme. There is ownership in authorizing formation of the emotional bond by sharing oneself, a gesture that can be rescinded. In the grasp of Disengaged Closing there can be a subtle awareness of the lure of emotional bond, that it is "sometimes just an arms length away of talking." Yet, there is hesitation, where "you almost want to stay there for a while," even an urge to draw her into this negative affective realm, to have her "feel the same."

Inevitably there is a release from Disengaged Closing, and the goal of emotional bond becomes clear – "you know where you want to go." A broader perspective unfolds that the condition of Disengaged Closing has something to do with how you are "feeling inside." Obtaining insight into the role that volition plays in this "vicious cycle" fosters further understanding that your own being stands in the way of the emotional bond. Even in these moments of relief, it seems that the condition of detachment lingers eternally nearby. A lapse in relational mindfulness can quickly and easily sweep you up, pulling you into the dark and rapidly unfolding expanse of Disengaged Closing.

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